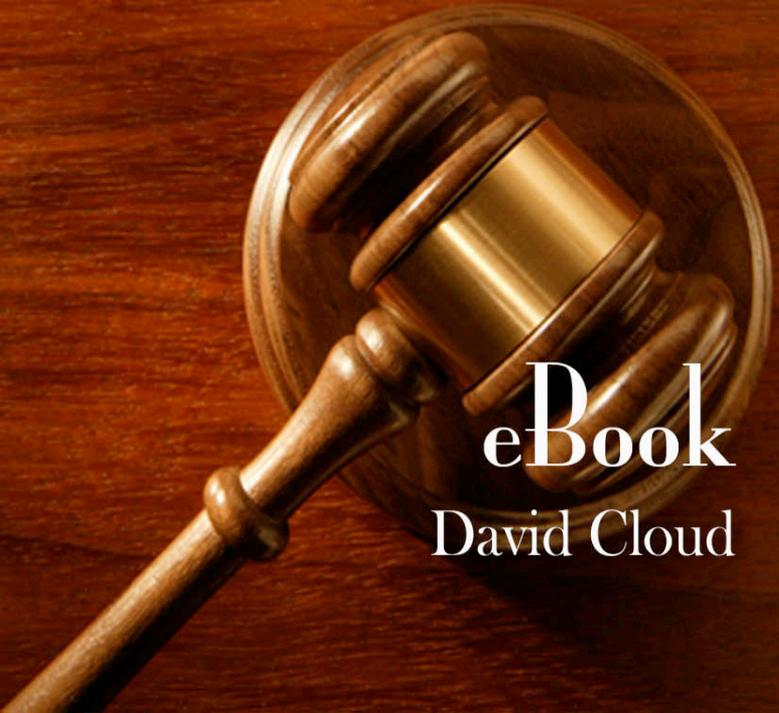


The **JUDGE NOT**
HERESY

Is it Legalism to
Judge Sin and Error?



eBook

David Cloud

The Judge Not Heresy
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“One of the most commonly-held myths in contemporary Christianity is the idea that the Bible forbids all judging.”
- David Cloud

Introduction

Having preached the Word of God for nearly four decades I am no stranger to controversy, and I am very familiar with the challenges that are put forth against “fundamentalist” style preaching.

In 1984, the Lord led me to begin publication of a monthly magazine called *O Timothy*. The title, taken from 1 Timothy 6:20, describes the passion and focus of the magazine, which is urging preachers in these last days to keep the faith once delivered to the saints and to avoid the error which is on every hand.

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.”

In 1996, we began the Fundamental Baptist Information Service through which we distribute similar types of articles electronically. Like the printed magazine, the goal in this particular aspect of our ministry is not devotional but is to assist preachers in the protection of the churches in this apostate hour through well-documented reports.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive by many people and overwhelmingly negative by others.

On the negative side, I can't count the number of times that people have written to challenge and correct me about my stand.

This book contains the essence of these challenges. These are the same challenges that every Bible-believing, separatist Christian must learn to deal with. There is no part of the world so remote that the believers will not be confronted with this misguided thinking.

I trust that my answers to these challenges will be an encouragement and a spiritual protection to many of God's people in these difficult but opportune days.

This material would make a good sermon series or a series for Sunday School at the Junior High level or above or for Youth meetings or Bible Institutes or Home Schooling programs.

The Judge Not Philosophy

The “judge not” philosophy has spread everywhere in these end times. It is one of the philosophies that lies at the heart of the formation of the one-world church. It is the devil’s winning ticket. If God’s people think they are forbidden to judge things by God’s Word and to reject everything that is contrary to it, they are left to drift along on the treacherous waters of end-time apostasy with no spiritual protection.

Consider some examples of the judge not philosophy from an assortment of people who have written to me. This goes hand-in-hand with the rejection of “separatism.”

These are from evangelicals, emergents, charismatics, Christian rockers, Southern Gospel lovers, and even independent Baptists.

The theme is that judging and reproofing sin and error and preaching and practicing separatism is mean-spirited, Pharisaical, and lacking in compassion and grace. It is alleged to be a poor testimony and a misrepresentation of true Christianity that turns people away. According to this view, it is impossible to know Jesus Christ in the reality of His grace and love and also to be a separatist. At the very least, the separatist is to be pitied, but it is more likely he that should be soundly rebuked.

EMERGING: “I grew up in your kind of Church and thank God he showed me that we are free in Christ. How sad that you spew out your Pharisaical judgmentalism. We are saved by faith in Jesus, not by getting all of our tenets of the faith just right. I feel sad for you, and will pray that you experience the freedom that Jesus brings.”

INDEPENDENT BAPTIST: “You are a judgmental, legalist who God/Jesus/or the Holy Spirit wouldn’t

have on His team without major changes to your philosophy; you are a divider, not a uniter.”

FORMER FUNDAMENTALIST: “I am so glad that I ‘came out of the closet’ some years ago and broke the chains of the bitterness and hatred [that I learned from fundamentalists] and now am able to enjoy my liberty in Christ while reaching the world with the Gospel and making disciples.”

A BAPTIST, SORT OF: “I’m a Christian first and a Baptist somewhere down the line. Not soon enough or separated just right to suit you I’m sure. Critical, judgmental men like you make many of us sorry we are Baptist. You always sit in judgment of others and really have a bad spirit about you. I think you might be a man who wants to be more than he is called to be or maybe you have been emasculated at home or in some other way. I think you are a self righteous \$#%@.”

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC LOVER: “I listen to contemporary Christian music and I DO NOT believe that I am ‘worldly.’ STOP being so judgmental. That is why I am not a part of the Baptists anymore. They are so critical and negative they cannot see the good.”

EVANGELICAL COLLEGE STUDENT: “I just feel that it would be best if you view Christianity not from your own perspective and assumptions (fundamentalist dogma) but from a spirit of Grace that says Jesus is Lord but all else may in fact be up for debate.”

EVANGELICAL: “Jesus came not only to save people from sin, but from suffocating Pharisees like yourself who are more interested in following some laws than having a relationship with Jesus. Don’t lose sight of what really matters: Jesus....not stupid legalities.”

CHRISTIAN ROCKER: “Don't be a Pharisee. There's nothing wrong with heavy Christian music. Search your own heart and take care of the plank in your own eye first. You guys really have a problem with the Grace of God! ‘Learn what this means - I desire mercy not sacrifice.’ Say something positive for once instead of being so judgmental all the time.”

A PROTESTANT: “I am amazed at the complete lack of charity and the intense, obscurely substantiated judgmentalism. For example, while I agree that infant baptism is not biblical, how can we go so far as to say it is heresy? I think that you guys have a major problem with the well spring of your life being pharisaical legalism, not the streams of living waters.”

CHUCK SWINDOLL SUPPORTER: “I have always been taught to be careful of the gatekeepers who set in judgment over others' works. If you disagree with Chuck that is OK but we all can disagree with each other on all kinds of things. You guys sound like hard-core legalists. Swindoll teaches about Christ's love. At least he's not a judgmental Pharisee.”

AN UNBELIEVER: “Are you out of your minds? Take your bible and smack yourself in the head with it and hope that in the process you knock yourself back into reality with the rest of the modern world.”

JOHN ELDRIDGE SUPPORTER: “I so pity your condemning life [which is] light years away and apart from the release of grace God gave us through Jesus our Savior.”

RICK WARREN SUPPORTER: “You should not sit in the Judgment seat.”

A SELF-PROFESSED “CCM-LOVING, NEW-KJV-USING, MOVIE-GOING, PANT-WEARING, SHORT-HAIRED WOMAN”: “I am just writing to express my feelings of anger toward your articles

which appear to be very judgmental. ... Allow people to be different. God loves variety, remember?”

JOHN PIPER SUPPORTER: “Like you I once was a legalistic, Christian who simply went through my life doing my joyless duties. I thought that my ‘duties’ were impressing God and that he couldn’t fulfill his plan in life without me. ... If someone doesn’t exactly line up with your way of thinking then they are apostate. I’m sorry, but you didn’t write the book on Christian living. Jesus Christ did.”

CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY STUDENT: “They will know you are Christians by your love. How sad it is to know that Christians would take their time to persecute their fellow believers on such matters as music or spiritual gifts. You can spend your whole life debating over issues as such, but until you receive the gift of genuine love in your heart, you’ll never understand or gain anything.”

BILLY GRAHAM SUPPORTER: “For the sake of Christianity you need to repent. Who are you to judge? Where is the love?”

JACK HYLES SUPPORTER: “Before you question others’ motives, perhaps you should remove the ‘mote’ out of your own eye and read Matthew 7:1, ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged.’ Leave the judging to God. You are doing huge damage to the cause of Christ.”

WOMAN PREACHER: “I pray you will be liberated from your shackles of pharisaical life and join other fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ who celebrate their freedom in Christ. Judge not!”

CHARISMATIC: “Who are you to judge? Perhaps some of us think that we are more righteous than another? I pray that you open your mind and stop putting God in a box. Stop judging; start loving.”

JOHN LENNON SUPPORTER: “Remember Jesus’ message? Don’t judge. All you need is love, is that not the basis of his teachings? Fundamentalism is not known for tolerance and only leads to division. Look at the good in people.”

PROMISE KEEPERS SUPPORTER: “My only question to you is why are you attempting to cause dissension and fragmentation within the body of Christ? Aren’t we supposed to come together as one body in the name of Jesus Christ, for the advancement of the Kingdom of God here on earth? Technicalities are for trial lawyers; the bible is for everyone. ... As a footnote. You can throw scripture verses at me left and right, to justify your argument. But what’s the point?”

ELVIS PRESLEY FAN: “Who are you to judge? Kind reminder: Judgment belongs to God and no one else and if you want my honest opinion about you. You hypocrite: how dare you preach God and condemn a child of His?”

A FREE THINKER: “Stop this nonsense and try actually READING the Bible and applying its message of inclusion, open-mindedness, love, and peace to your own life.”

ROMAN CATHOLIC: “I can understand why this world hates fundamentalist Christians when you write legalistic articles like this. There is no humility in your critiques, only a pharisaical elitism that makes my stomach turn. As Catholics we are not taught to judge others by our faith, but to look at ourselves.”

Is Judging Forbidden?

One of the most commonly-held myths in contemporary Christianity is the idea that the Bible forbids all judging.

The following are some of the key passages that are used to support this doctrine, but when we examine them in context and by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we find that these passages are being greatly abused.

We will begin with the passage that is abused above all others:

MATTHEW 7:1-5 -- Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

First, if we examine the context of this passage we see that the Lord Jesus is not condemning all judging; He is condemning hypocritical judging (Mat. 7:5).

To forbid something in another person that I allow in my own life is hypocrisy, and it is a great sin. For a parent to tell his children not to listen to rock music when he listens to Country-Western is hypocrisy. To tell my children not to smoke when I smoke or to attend church when I don't attend church, or to seek God's will when I am not that serious about His will, or to be kind to others when I am not kind to them or to their mother, or for a mother to tell her children to obey her when she doesn't obey her husband is hypocrisy.

This is the type of thing that Christ was warning about in Matthew 5.

This is not to say, though, that Christ forbade all judging. That is evident from the context. In the same sermon, He taught His people to be on the outlook for false prophets.

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (Mat. 7:15-17).

It is impossible to beware of false prophets without judging doctrine and practice by God's Word. How can I know who a false prophet is if I do not measure preachers and teachers by the Bible?

That Christ is not condemning all judging is also evident by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In other passages the believer is commanded to judge things.

The Lord Jesus Himself said we are to judge righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24).

We are to judge sin in the church (1 Cor. 5:3, 12). *“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, ... For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?”*

We are to judge matters between the brethren (1 Cor. 6:5). *“I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?”*

We are to judge preaching (1 Cor. 14:29). *“Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.”*

We are to judge those who preach false gospels, false christs, and false spirits (2 Cor. 11:1-4). *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in*

Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.”

We are to judge the works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”*

We are to judge spirits (1 John 4:1). *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”*

In fact, we are to judge ALL things (1 Cor. 2:15-16). *“But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”*

The spiritual man does not judge things by his own thinking but by the mind of Christ as revealed in the Scripture. He knows that he lives in a fallen world filled with lies and error and spiritual deception and he knows that he has the light of God’s truth in the Scripture, and he thus judges *all* things by that light.

ROMANS 14:4 -- “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.”

This is another passage that is frequently abused. It is said that this verse forbids us to expose sin and error.

The verse is also used to support the doctrine that Scripture can be divided into essential and non-essential doctrine. One pastor wrote to me and said:

“Romans 14 is probably the most violated passage by those of us who call ourselves ‘fundamentalists’ (note that I include myself). We have either skipped over that chapter or given it a sinfully surface interpretation and danced around its powerful

mandates for dealing with differences over 'secondary' doctrine within the church. By 'secondary' I do not mean 'unimportant.' I must be 'fully persuaded' about all Scriptural issues, though I must welcome and neither judge nor look down on those who differ on some of them."

Romans 14 is an important passage, but it has nothing to do with the idea that there are things in Scripture of secondary value. The two examples given by the apostle are eating meats and keeping holy days. These are matters about which the Bible is silent. There are no divine mandates in the New Testament faith concerning these things.

Thus the subject of Romans 14 is how we are to deal with matters NOT CLEARLY TAUGHT IN SCRIPTURE. In matters in which God has not plainly spoken, I am to give liberty.

On the other hand, in matters in which God has plainly spoken, the only "liberty" is to obey.

People use Romans 14:4 to defend many areas of plain disobedience, such as worldly music, long hair on men, immodest dress, women preachers, etc. Since the Bible has spoken plainly about these matters, it is a misuse to apply Romans 14:4 to them.

Romans 14 is not saying that there are some doctrines that are essential and some that are non-essential. It is saying that there are some things clearly taught in Scripture and those things are binding, but there are many things that are not addressed in Scripture and these are not binding. In such matters, each believer is at liberty to make his own decision before the Lord, but he cannot make his conviction a law for others.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:3-5 -- "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he

that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

This is another passage that is misused by those who hold the nonjudgmental philosophy, but Paul is not saying that believers should judge nothing at all and should leave all judgment to God. This would be contrary to many passages in the same epistle (i.e., 1 Corinthians 2:15; 5:3, 12; 6:2-3; 14:29).

Paul is saying, rather, that believers are not to judge ministers by their own human thinking as to what a minister should be and how he should teach and act, but they are to judge righteous judgment according to God’s Word.

He is talking about being judged by “man’s judgment” (1 Cor. 4:3). It is not required that a preacher bend to man’s thinking; it is required that he be faithful to God, and this is the only proper standard by which he can be judged.

Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is also saying that ultimate and final judgment belongs to the Lord; therefore, we must be humble and cautious in our judgments in this present time (1 Cor. 4:4-5). Even though we have the Word of God and are obliged to judge everything on the basis of God’s Word, we must not think that we are infallible. We don’t even know our own hearts infallibly (Jer. 17:9). We have to walk in the light that we have and live our lives and exercise our ministries by that light, but our knowledge is imperfect in this present world and our judgments are fallible.

We can know if a man’s teaching is false and we can know enough, therefore, to mark his error and to avoid it, but we do not know the secrets of men’s hearts and we do not know all of the things that will come into play when God judges

men in the perfect light of a coming day. Thus we know that all of our judgments in this world are provisional and the final judgment will be given only by God.

JAMES 4:11-12 -- “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”

This passage is also frequently misused by the ecumenical crowd to support the false doctrine that Christians are forbidden to judge.

To make these verses teach that Christians can never judge, though, throws the Bible into confusion. There is right judgment and wrong judgment. As we have seen, many verses command us to judge righteous judgment (Luke 12:57; John 7:24; 1 Cor. 2:15). We are to judge preaching (1 Cor. 14:29), sin in the churches (1 Cor. 5:3), issues in the churches (1 Cor. 6:5), false teachers (Mat. 7:15; Rom. 16:17); spirits (1 John 4:1), etc.

What type of judgment, then, is James forbidding? The context clarifies the matter.

First, James is warning against evil speaking (Jam. 4:11).

Proper judging is to speak the truth in love. The truth is not evil, and speaking the truth in love is not evil. A passion for truth and zeal against error is not evil. The Psalmist modeled that passion. “Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (Psalms 119:128).

The type of judging condemned by James is judging in the sense of tearing down, tale bearing, and slander. It is judging with an evil intent. When one judges sin and error scripturally, it is never with a desire to hurt people.

We see an example of evil judgment in the Pharisees. They judged Jesus in an evil manner in that they were not judging on the basis of truth; they were judging by their own tradition, and they wanted to hurt Him (Jn. 7:52). The false teachers at Galatia and Corinth judged Paul in the same manner, trying to tear him down in the eyes of the churches (2 Cor. 10:10).

This is what James forbids, but he is not forbidding the scriptural and compassionate and even zealous judging of error and of those who promote error. The apostles and prophets of the early churches exhibited this type of judgment constantly, as we can see in the book of Acts and in the Epistles.

Second, James is warning about judging in a way that is contrary to the law of God (“there is one lawgiver,” Jam. 4:12).

This refers to judging others by human standards rather than divine, thus setting oneself up as the lawgiver. The Pharisees did this when they judged Jesus by their traditions (Mat. 15:1-3).

On the other hand, when a believer judges things by God’s Word in a godly and compassionate manner, he is not exercising his own judgment; he is exercising God’s judgment. When, for example, we say that it is wrong for a woman to be a pastor or it is a shame for a man to have long hair or that those who love the world are adulterers, this is not our judgment; it is God’s (1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 11:14; Jam. 4:4).

(For more on verses misused by the ecumenical movement see the book *Things Hard to Be Understood: A Handbook of Biblical Difficulties*. See particularly the studies on 1 Samuel 24:4-10; Matthew 18:15-17; Mark 9:38-40; John 13:35; 17:21; Acts 5:38-39. This book is available in print and eBook editions from Way of Life Literature, www.wayoflife.org.)

The following additional comments about judging are by the late Franklin G. Huling:

This question, Is it right to judge? is one that puzzles many sincere Christians. A careful and open-minded study of the Bible makes it clear that concerning certain vital matters, it is not only right but a positive duty to judge. Many do not know that--THE SCRIPTURE COMMANDS TO JUDGE.

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded, "Judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). He told a man, "Thou hast rightly judged" (Luke 7:43). To others, our Lord asked, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" (Luke 12:57).

The apostle Paul wrote, "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say" (1 Cor. 10:15). Again, Paul declared, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things" (1 Cor. 2:15). It is our positive duty to judge.

False Teachers and False Teaching

"Beware of false prophets!" (Matthew 7:15) is the warning and command of our Lord. But how could we "beware" and how could we know they are "false prophets" if we do not judge? And what is the God-given standard by which we are to judge? "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to THIS WORD, it is because there is NO LIGHT in them" (Isaiah 8:20). "Ye shall know them by their fruits," Christ said (Mat. 7:16). And in judging the "fruits," we must judge by God's Word, not by what appeals to human reasoning. Many things seem good to human judgment which are false to the Word of God.

The apostle Paul admonished believers, "Now I beseech you, brethren, MARK THEM which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and AVOID THEM. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own

belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” (Romans 16:17-18). This apostolic command could not be obeyed were it not right to judge. God wants us to know His Word and then test all teachers and teaching by it. Notice also that it is the false teachers who make the “divisions,” and not those who protest against their false teaching. And these deceivers are not serving Christ, as they profess, “but their own belly,” or their own “bread and butter as we would put it. We are to “MARK THEM” and “AVOID THEM.”

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” (2 Cor. 6:17; read also verses 14-18)

“From such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5). “Withdraw yourselves.” (2 Thess. 3:6)

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Eph. 5:11)

“ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL; CLEAVE TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD.” (Rom. 12:9)

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thess. 5:21)

It would be impossible to obey these injunctions of God’s Word unless it were right to judge. And remember, nothing is “good” in God’s sight that is not true to His Word.

The apostle John wrote, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test, judge] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Again he wrote, “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh... If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, RECEIVE HIM NOT into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 7, 10-11). This Scripture

commands us to judge between those who do and those who do not bring the true doctrine of Christ.

Whenever a child of God contributes to a denominational budget that supports Modernist missionaries or teachers, he is guilty before God, according to this Scripture, of bidding them “God speed” in the most effective way possible. And he thereby becomes a “partaker” with them of their “evil deeds” of spreading soul-damning poison. How terrible, but how true! Arouse yourself, child of God. If you are guilty, ask God to forgive you and help you never again to be guilty of the blood of souls for whom Christ died. When we are willing to suffer for Christ, we can readily see the truth of God’s Word on this tremendously important matter. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:12).

The reason Christendom is today honeycombed and paralyzed by Satanic Modernism is because Christians have not obeyed the command of God’s Word to judge and put away and separate from false teachers and false teaching when they first appeared in their midst. Physical health is maintained by separation from disease germs. Spiritual health is maintained by separation from germs of false doctrine. The greatest peril of our day is not too much judging, but too little judging of spiritual falsehood. God wants His children to be like the noble Bereans who “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Romans 2:1-3 is also addressed to the religious hypocrite who condemned himself because he was guilty of the same things for which he condemned others. James 4:11-12 refers to an evil spirit of backbiting and fault finding, not to judging whether teachers or teachings agree or disagree with God’s Word. The Bible never contradicts itself. To understand one portion of Scripture we must view it

in the light of all Scripture. “No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private (isolated) interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20). “Comparing spiritual things (words) with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13).

Other Matters to Be Judged

Immoral conduct of professed believers in Christ is to be judged. 1 Corinthians chapter 5 tells a sad story and closes with the apostolic injunction, “Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (2 Cor. 5:13).

Disputes between Christians concerning “things that pertain to this life” (1 Cor. 6:3) should be judged by a tribunal of fellow Christians instead of going before unbelievers in the civil courts. The whole sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians makes clear God’s plan for His people in this regard. And some startling truths are here revealed: First, “the saints shall judge the world.” Second, “we shall judge angels” (1 Cor. 6:2- 3). Beloved, are we letting God prepare us for this high place?

We ought to judge ourselves. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Cor. 13:5). “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened (child trained) of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:31-32). What a change and what a blessing it would be if we would judge our own faults as uncharitably as we do the faults of others--and if we would judge the failings of others as charitably as we do our own! And Christians could save themselves much chastening of the Lord if they would judge and confess and cease their disobedience to God. And, O, how much dishonour and lack of fruit would our blessed Lord be spared!

Limitations of Human Judgment

We are not to judge scruples. God forbids our judging our brethren concerning the eating of certain kinds of food, keeping of days, etc. Romans chapter 14; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33; and Colossians 2:16-17 cover this subject.

We are also not to judge motives. See 1 Corinthians 4:1-5. Only God can see into the heart and know the motives that underlie actions.

We are also not to judge who is saved. “The Lord knoweth them that are His” (2 Tim. 2:19). We cannot look into anyone’s heart and say whether or not they have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, if they profess that they have. But we had better test ourselves according to 2 Cor. 5:17: “If any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” If this change has not taken place, our profession is vain.

Elements in Judgment

The New Testament Greek word that is most often translated “judge” or “judgment” is “krino.” On the one hand, it means to distinguish, to decide, to determine, to conclude, to try, to think and to call in question. That is what God wants His children to do as to whether preachers, teachers and their teachings are true or false to His Word.

The apostle Paul writes: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent” (Philippians 1:9-10). A wrong idea of love and lack of knowledge and judgment causes God’s people often to approve things that are anything but excellent in God’s sight. The epistle to the Hebrews tells us that mature believers, that is, those who are of “full age,” are those who by reason of use have their

senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

On the other hand, the Greek word “krino”--judge or judgment--means to condemn, to sentence, and to punish. This is God’s prerogative, for He has said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

Thus Christians are to exercise discernment, but not vengeance.

Guard Against a Wrong Attitude

Christians should watch against the tendency of the flesh to assume a critical and censorious attitude toward those who do not share our opinions about other matters than those which have to do with Bible doctrine and moral conduct. Rather than “pick to pieces” our brethren in Christ, it is our privilege and duty to do everything we can to encourage their spiritual upbuilding. We ought to love and pray for one another and consider ourselves lest we be tempted.

A Final Word

If you are saved, my reader, let us not forget that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10). It will be well with those who are studying God’s Word, walking in the light of it, living for Christ and the salvation of souls. It will go ill with those who have accepted Christ but who are living for the things of this world.

If you are a mere professor of Christ, or profess nothing, my friend, may I lovingly remind you that “judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel?” (1 Peter 4:17). Delay not another moment to ask God for Christ’s sake to forgive your sins. Surrender your heart and will to the

loving Saviour who died for you. Make Him the Lord of your life. Happy and blessed will you be, now and forever (Franklin G. Huling).

Is Love Nonjudgmental?

When Bible-believing Christians measure leaders, churches, denominations, and movements by the Bible, they are invariably charged with a lack of love. A woman wrote to me and said:

“You preach separatism from heresy. WHAT ABOUT LOVE? ... The lost will never be reached through SUCH HATRED” (Letter from a reader, May 1997).

A graduate of a fundamental Baptist college wrote along the same line:

“Last I checked, the Lord Jesus Christ was more concerned about our love than He was about our music or anything else”

To this generation, the “negative” aspects of “fundamentalist” Christianity are unloving. To carefully test things by the Bible is supposedly a lack of compassion. To mark and avoid false teachers is hateful. To warn of false gospels, to discipline heretics, and to separate from error is mean-spirited.

A few years ago, evangelist Jack Van Impe, a former fundamentalist, rejected biblical separatism and adopted the ecumenical philosophy. He immediately began teaching that biblical discernment and separation is unloving:

“Let’s forget our labels and come together in love, and the pope has called for that. I had 400 verses on love. Till I die I will proclaim nothing but love for all my brothers and sisters in Christ, my Catholic brothers and sisters, Protestant brothers and sisters, Christian Reformed, Lutherans, I don’t care what label you are. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.”

This is the popular view of love: love doesn't judge, isn't critical, doesn't separate. But it is a false and dangerous position.

If we define love by the Bible itself, we find that it is never set in contrast to godly judgment and holiness and a zeal for the truth.

John said that godly love is to keep God's commandments (1 John 3:1-3; 5:1-3).

This is true Christian love, not the feel-good, rock & roll-driven mysticism of the contemporary movement that preaches world-loving license and broadminded tolerance.

The Contemporary Crowd Is Confused about the Definition of Love

Love is essential, of course. God is love, and the Bible says that without love "I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

What is love?

To human thinking, "love" is a tender feeling, a romantic sentiment. This generation speaks of "falling in love" and "falling out of love." This refers to an emotion.

To this ecumenical generation, "love" is broadmindedness and non-judgmental tolerance. When the rock band U2 wanted to urge people to support the Irish referendum to approve same-sex "marriage," they posted an Instagram note that said, "In the name of love vote yes." Three members of the band (Bono, The Edge, and Larry Mullen, Jr.) profess to be Christians and have a great influence in evangelicalism, the emerging church, and the contemporary worship movement, but they define love by the rock & roll dictionary rather than by the Bible. Scripturally-speaking, love is not tolerance of sin and error.

Consider the following Scriptures:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, IF A MAN LOVE ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORDS: and my Father

will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

“And this I pray, that your LOVE MAY ABOUND YET MORE AND MORE IN KNOWLEDGE AND IN ALL JUDGMENT; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:9-10).

“For THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD, THAT WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

“And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which WE COMMAND YOU. And the Lord direct your hearts into THE LOVE OF GOD, and into the patient waiting for Christ. Now WE COMMAND YOU, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (2 Th. 3:4-6).

Biblical love is obedience to God and His Word. We see in 2 Thessalonians 3 that the love of God is sandwiched between verses that emphasize obedience to God’s commandments, including separation from disobedient brethren!

Love is not a warm fuzzy feeling. Christian love is not an emotion, though emotion is closely associated with it.

Feelings of love come and go in this present life, but the action of biblical love can be steadfast. For a woman to love her husband means she submits to him and serves him according to the Bible as unto the Lord. For a man to love his wife means he treats her in the way the Bible commands. The emotion of love is important, but it is a very secondary thing, and true love is not dependent on an emotion.

Biblical love is spiritually and doctrinally vigilant. It is based on knowledge and judgment from God's Word. It proves all things and approves only those things that reflect the will of God.

Was the Lord Jesus Christ unloving when He drove the moneychangers from the temple with a whip (John 2:15-17), or when He looked on the people "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mk. 3:5), or when he called the Pharisees a "generation of vipers" (Mat. 23:33), or when he addressed Peter as Satan (Matt. 16:23), or when He instructed His disciples not to give holy things unto "dogs" and "swine" (Mat. 7:6), or when He called His own disciples "fools and slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25), or when He said that He hates the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6; 15)?

Was the apostle Paul unloving when he rebuked Peter publicly for his compromise (Galatians 1)? Or when he named the names of false teachers and compromisers such as Hymenaeus and Alexander ten different times in the Pastoral Epistles? Was the apostle Paul unloving when he forbade women to teach or to usurp authority over men in 1 Timothy 2:12?

Of course not! And neither are preachers today unloving when they follow in these godly footsteps.

Jesus said to the churches, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

Biblical love does not mean that I ignore things that are wrong and things that are spiritually and morally injurious.

The contemporary crowd is very confused about the definition of biblical love.

The Contemporary Crowd Is Confused about the Direction of Love

The contemporary crowd is also confused about the proper direction of love.

The first direction of love must be toward God.

When discussing these matters, the contemporary crowd talks much about love of man, but what about the love of God? According to the Lord Jesus Christ, what is the greatest commandment?

“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mat. 22:35-39).

The first and great commandment is not to love one's neighbor. The first and great commandment is to love God with all the heart, soul, and mind.

The contemporary crowd points a finger at the Bible-believing “fundamentalist” and charges him with a lack of love toward men because he exercises judgment and discipline and separation.

What, though, about love for God and His Word?

The ecumenist tells me that I need to love all the denominations regardless of doctrine. I reply that I need to love God and His Truth first, and that means that I will obey the Bible, and that means I will measure, mark, and avoid those who are committed to doctrinal error.

A genuine love for God requires that I care more about God's Word and God's will than about men and their feelings and opinions and programs.

We agree with Charles Haddon Spurgeon when he said:

“On all hands we hear cries for unity in this, and unity in that; but to our mind the main need of this age is not compromise, but conscientiousness. ‘First pure, then peaceable.’ It is easy to cry ‘a confederacy,’ but that union which is not based upon the truth of God is rather a conspiracy than a communion. Charity by all means; but honesty also. Love, of course, but love to God as well as love to men, and love of truth as well as love of union. It is exceedingly difficult in these times to preserve one’s fidelity before God and one’s fraternity among men. Should not the former be preferred to the latter if both cannot be maintained? We think so” (Spurgeon, “The Down Grade - Second Article,” *The Sword and the Trowel*, April 1887, Notes, p. 16).

The direction of love not only must be toward God but it must also be toward those who are in spiritual danger.

The contemporary crowd tells me that I need to love the Roman Catholic, the emergent, etc., but they are largely silent on the subject of love for those who are deceived by these people.

We are charged with being unloving, for example, when we expose the fact that the late Pope John Paul II or Mother Teresa promoted a false sacramental gospel and venerated Mary as the Queen of Heaven. But the fact is that we love people enough to warn of false gospels so they will not be end up in eternal hell.

In about 1980 my wife and I had a discussion with a Catholic nun who worked with the Sisters of Charity, the organization founded by Mother Teresa. She said she “loved Jesus” and doubtless was a very earnest, religious, self-sacrificing person, but she believed that Jesus is the consecrated wafer of the mass, that Mary was assisting in her salvation, and that even Hindus who pray to their gods sincerely will go to heaven.

The Christian rock approach would be to accept this nun's "love for Jesus" as genuine and not to analyze her beliefs very carefully and certainly not to criticize them. The CCM approach, in fact, would be to join this nun in worshipping God with praise songs.

But that's not true biblical love. It's not love for God who has given His Word and demanded that we honor it and it alone, and it is not love for the nun herself, who according to the Bible worships a false christ and follows a false gospel that will lead to hell.

To love a false teacher does not mean that I turn a blind eye to his error and strive to have unity with him regardless of his doctrine. It means that I obey the Bible and mark and avoid him (Romans 16:17), that I expose his error publicly to protect those who might be led astray by his teaching.

A shepherd who loves wolves more than the sheep is a confused and harmful shepherd.

In conclusion, we quote from the words of James Henley Thornwell, a staunch Old School Presbyterian preacher who fought against theological modernism in the 19th century. He was the sixth president of South Carolina College (today the University of South Carolina). He was weary with the compromising evangelicals of his day, who said they loved the truth but were soft in their stance and refused to withstand heresy boldly.

Note his powerful words and his correct understanding of biblical love:

"To employ soft words and honeyed phrases in discussing questions of everlasting importance; to deal with errors that strike at the foundations of all human hope as if they were harmless and venial mistakes; to bless where God disapproves, and to make apologies where He calls us to stand up like men and assert, though it may be the aptest method of securing popular applause in a sophisticated age, is cruelty to man and treachery to Heaven. Those who

on such subjects attach more importance to the rules of courtesy than they do to the measures of truth do not defend the citadel, but betray it into the hands of its enemies. Love for Christ, and for the souls for whom He died, will be the exact measure of our zeal in exposing the dangers by which men's souls are ensnared" (quoted in a sermon by George Sayles Bishop, author of *The Doctrines of Grace and Kindred Themes*).

Legalism

“Legalism” is a term frequently used to describe Bible-believing Christians who are zealous for pure doctrine and who desire to maintain holy standards of living in this wicked hour. I have been called a “legalist” an average of at least once a day for decades! Consider a few examples:

“You, sir, are a legalist that the Pharisees would have been mighty proud of.”

“You have a narrow minded legalistic view of Scripture. ... I write contemporary praise music, music that is used in churches in worship of God. It’s not for your approval or anyone else no matter what denomination or off the wall sect of a denomination they are.”

“Your website makes me cringe. I can understand why this world hates fundamentalist Christians when you write legalistic articles like this. There is no humility in your critiques, only a pharisaical elitism that makes my stomach turn.”

The “liberty” attitude that lies behind the charge of legalism was expressed at a “Christian” rock concert called Greenbelt ‘83:

“We don’t believe in a fundamentalist approach. We don’t set ground rules. Our teaching is non-directive. We want to encourage people to make their own choices.”

It is instructive to observe that this is exactly the attitude and philosophy that has been preached by rock & roll since the 1950s and that it is a perfect reflection of the attitude that dominates secular society today. The world did not learn this from Christian rockers; Christian rockers learned it from the world.

Those who have this mindset label the “old-fashioned” Bible Christian a “legalist,” but it is a slanderous and wrongheaded accusation.

What Legalism Is

True legalism has a two-fold definition in the Word of God.

First, legalism is to mix works with grace for salvation.

If someone preaches a gospel that is not grace alone, if it is intermingled with works or sacraments of any sort, it is impure and is a false, legalistic gospel.

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Romans 11:6).

The warning of a legalistic gospel is the theme of the epistle of Galatians. Paul warns the churches against perverting the gospel by turning from the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7) and emphasizes that salvation is not by works or law-keeping but by the grace of Christ alone.

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:10-11).

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But

after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24-25).

According to this definition, legalists today are those who add works to the grace of Christ for salvation. The Roman Catholic Church does this. So does the Church of Christ and the Worldwide Church of God and Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists and many others. Oftentimes they claim to teach salvation by “grace alone,” but they redefine grace to include works.

Second, legalism is to add human tradition to the Word of God.

“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:7-9).

We must be careful never to exalt our own tradition and thinking to the same level of authority with the Word of God. There is *one* authority for faith and practice, and that is the Bible. Anything that is exalted to a place of authority equal to the Bible is condemned by God.

The Pharisees of old, in committing both of these errors, were true legalists. They rejected the grace of Jesus Christ and taught that the way of salvation was by the keeping of the law and they made their own tradition authoritative over people’s lives without a biblical basis.

The Roman Catholic Church also commits both of these errors.

Many others add things to the Word of God today. Christian Science adds Mary Baker Eddy’s writings. Seventh-day Adventism adds Ellen G. White’s writings. Many Pentecostals and Charismatics add (at least in practice) personal revelations and experience. Some old-

time Pentecostals made prohibitions against drinking Coca-Cola and wearing necklaces and exalted these rules to the level of Scripture.

We must be careful when we seek to apply the principles of Scripture to Christian living that we do not fall into this trap today.

To set specific standards of modesty for female church workers that are supported by clear Scriptural principles, such as requiring a certain dress length and forbidding shorts, is not legalism, because the Bible requires modesty and forbids nakedness, even defining it as showing the leg and thigh and such (Isa. 47:2-3), and warns about the effect of female dress on the male because of the very visual nature of his sexuality (Prov. 7:10; Mat. 5:28).

But setting standards can become legalism if the requirements go beyond Scripture. We must be very careful in drawing lines, that our lines are God's and not our own.

I have heard of churches that have forbidden men to wear pink shirts, because it is allegedly "feminine," but this is going far out on a limb. The color pink, while vaguely associated with femininity in some places, is not so intricately associated with it that we can make a law about it.

Other churches have forbidden beards and facial hair. One mission organization that supports Central American national pastors has this rule, but it is more than ridiculous; it is legalistic, because not only does the Bible not forbid facial hair on men, it encourages it by the example of Old Testament prophets (Ezr. 9:3) and even Jesus Christ Himself (Isa. 50:6). Beards are mentioned 15 times in the Bible and never in a negative context. This is true legalism.

Another mission board required that missionaries cannot be interracially married and forbade the missionary couples even to adopt children of another race, but while there are practical issues that should be considered pertaining to

interracial marriages and adoptions, the Bible nowhere strictly forbids this. Thus, to make laws about such things is a legalistic approach.

We repeat, we must be very careful in drawing lines, that our lines are God's and not our own.

What Legalism Is Not

Having seen what legalism is, let us now consider what it is not.

In a nutshell, for a Bible preacher to exhort God's saved-by-grace, blood-washed people to obey the details of God's Word by the power of the indwelling Christ is not legalism, because this is precisely what God requires.

Consider the following Scriptures very carefully.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10).

Here we see that while the blood-washed saint is saved *by* grace *without* works, he is saved *unto* good works. The believer obeys God's Word, not in order to be saved but because he has been saved. It therefore cannot be legalism for a preacher to urge God's people to keep the works of God found in the New Testament faith.

I have counted 88 specific commandments in the epistle of Ephesians alone. Consider this one: “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (Eph. 5:11). This is a far-reaching commandment. The believer must guard every area of his life, every activity, to make sure that he is not having fellowship with the works of darkness. Not only so, but he is to reprove the works of darkness. This is one of the verses that spoke to my heart nearly 40 years ago and convinced

me that I had to put rock & roll music out of my Christian life. It is certainly an unfruitful work of darkness, but the requirement does not stop with music. It involves every part of the Christian life: dress, companionship, music, entertainment, literature, relationships with churches and professing believers, etc.

To take such commandments of the New Testament faith seriously and to apply them rigorously cannot, therefore, be “legalism.”

Consider another key passage:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:11-15).

Here, again, we see that the grace of Christ does not teach Christians to live carelessly or to tolerate sin and error. It does not encourage them to live as close to the world as possible, but to live in a strict manner concerning holiness.

The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, which is a far-reaching obligation. It means that we are to examine every area of our lives and churches in order to root out ungodliness. Again, this involves every aspect of the Christian life: dress, companionship, music, entertainment, literature, you name it.

Notice in Titus 2:15 that the Spirit of God concludes this passage about avoiding ungodliness with the following exhortation to preachers: *“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”*

The preacher has a solemn obligation before God to speak, exhort, and rebuke on the basis of these passages. It cannot, therefore, be any sort of “legalism” if a preacher takes this obligation seriously and applies this teaching to every area of life, speaking, exhorting, and rebuking about ungodliness and worldly lusts in the realm of music and dress, companionship, entertainment, etc.

Consider another passage:

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

Here, again, we see that a preacher has a solemn responsibility before God for his preaching and he will give an account to Jesus Christ. He is to preach the Word. What part of it? All of it! He is not only to read the Word verbatim; he is to preach it and to apply it to the people’s everyday lives. He is to reprove, rebuke, and exhort. He is to make sure that the Word of God gets down to where the people live. He is to apply it to every aspect of their individual lives, their homes, their employment, their service for Christ, their companionships, their entertainment, their dress, their music, you name it. The Word of God speaks to every area of life, and the preacher is obligated to follow it wherever it leads. This is definitely not “legalism.”

Consider another passage:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mat. 28:20).

This is part of the obligation of Christ’s Great Commission. Those who believe the gospel and are

baptized are to be taught to keep ALL things that Christ has commanded. This is another far-reaching requirement. It means that the churches are to be concerned about the New Testament faith in its entirety and not just some part of it that happens to be acceptable at the moment or some part that is viewed as “essential.” Church leaders are to train their people to keep everything Christ has commanded by His Spirit in the canon of Scripture. The churches are obligated, therefore, to teach separation from the world, separation from false teaching, rejection of heretics, church discipline, the reality of eternal hell, repentance, denial of self, everything; they must teach the popular things and the unpopular. To take Christ’s commandment seriously and to seek to be faithful to the whole New Testament faith cannot, therefore, be “legalism.”

Strict obedience to God’s Word by Christ’s grace is the way of liberty, not bondage.

Consider the following two statements by the Lord that have direct bearing on our subject:

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

Since continuing in Christ’s Word is the way to demonstrate true discipleship and since the love of God is to obey His commandments, it is obvious that strict obedience of the New Testament faith is not any sort of legalism.

The believer does not keep the Word of God in his own strength or to his own glory. He keeps it by the power of the indwelling Christ and to His glory. As Paul said, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ*

liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Nevertheless, keeping all of the New Testament faith is the responsibility of every believer and proclaiming all of it is the responsibility of every preacher, and this is *not* legalism.

What about 2 Corinthians 3:6?

“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Corinthians 3:6).

This verse has been used to justify the philosophy that the New Testament Christian is not obligated to be “strict” in regard to the commandments of God. We are to keep the “spirit of the law” rather than the letter of it.

But this is an abuse of the verse.

Consider the context, which is the most fundamental principle of Bible interpretation. In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul is contrasting the law of Moses with the New Testament faith and is saying that we are not ministers of the old law but of the new; we are not preaching the law of Moses but the gospel of Christ; we are not following the law of Moses but we are following the new law of the Spirit.

When Paul says the “letter killeth” he is referring to the law of Moses. The reason the law of Moses kills is because its purpose is to reveal man’s sin and guilt and a sinner cannot live up to its demands and therefore is under its curse (Rom. 3:19-20).

In particular, Paul was warning against the Judaizers who tried to mingle the grace of Christ with the law of Moses. See Acts 15 and Galatians 1:6-9; 2:16-21; 3:1-3, 19-26.

When we compare Scripture with Scripture, which is another fundamental principle of Bible interpretation, we

see that the New Testament apostles and prophets taught elsewhere that we *should* be very strict in our approach to doctrine and Christian living; we should obey everything in the New Testament faith. See for example 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Timothy 1:3; 6:13-14; Titus 2:11-15.

Phariseeism

Christians who have unbending biblical convictions and are “strict” in their approach to Christian living and separation from sin and error are often labeled “Pharisees.”

Many of the Promise Keepers supporters who wrote in the 1990s to rebuke me for reproving their movement, called me a Pharisee.

Consider a couple of examples:

“I wonder what makes Mr. Cloud so sure he’s right and everybody else is wrong? Look at the Pharisees, Mr. Cloud, and then look in the mirror!”

“You’re the best example I think I’ve ever seen of the Pharisee who sits at the front of the synagogue giving thanks for not being a sinner like everyone else.”

To label a Bible-believing Christian who is passionate to honor Christ and to obey God’s Word a Pharisee is a slander, because the error of Phariseeism was not their zeal to obey the Scripture. They had no such zeal. They were zealous, rather, to create their own religious system and to exalt their own self-righteousness.

Though the term “Pharisee” is thrown around a lot today, particularly by the contemporary crowd, it must be defined biblically.

(1) Phariseeism is supplanting the Word of God with man-made tradition and thereby making the Word of God of none effect. *“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Mat. 15:7-9).

(2) Phariseeism is rejecting Jesus Christ. *“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb*

both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (Mat. 12:22-24).

(3) Phariseeism is perverting the Gospel of the free grace of Christ into a work’s salvation. “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Mat. 23:15).*

(4) Phariseeism is self-righteousness. “*And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (Lk. 18:9-12).*

(5) Phariseeism is the practice of religious hypocrisy. “*In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Lk. 12:1).*

The Pharisees were at the forefront of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and of the persecution of the early Christians.

It is a great error to label a Christ-loving, Bible-honoring, grace-gospel-preaching, self-debasing, peace-loving Christian a Pharisee.

Jesus’ anger at the Pharisees was *not* because they loved God’s Word and took it too seriously! It was *not* because they were careful to honor the details of God’s Word. *Never* did Jesus reprove them for such a thing.

Zeal for God’s Word is right. The following testimony expresses the very essence of true spirituality and godliness:

“Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (Psalms 119:128).

Was the Psalmist speaking here as a Pharisee? Of course not. It is spiritual to esteem all of God’s precepts concerning all things to be right and to hate everything that is contrary to God’s precepts. Note the emphasis on ALL precepts and ALL things and EVERY false way. This is the very strictest sort of Biblicist mindset, and it is held forth in the pages of God’s Word as the correct mindset and attitude of the man who loves God passionately.

Jesus reproved the Pharisees for turning the law of Moses into a way of salvation, which it was never intended to be, and for their hypocrisy and for their lack of love and grace and compassion. Consider the following reproof:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23).

Jesus *didn’t* say, “You Pharisees make far too much of tithing and other such things in God’s law. You are much too zealous for God’s Word. Don’t you know that God never intended you to take everything so strictly. Why don’t you lighten up?”

No, Jesus said they did well to take God’s Word strictly by honoring even the details of tithing. What He hated was that they had missed the heart and soul of the Law, which was judgment, mercy, and faith. The Law was not given as a means to obtain righteousness; rather, it revealed God’s extreme holiness and man’s fallenness and pointed to Christ as the believing sinner’s justification (Rom. 3:19-24; Gal. 3:10-13, 24-25). The Pharisees missed the heart of the Law which is to love God with all one’s heart and to love one’s neighbor as oneself. The fact that they were complicit in the

death of the Son of God is clear evidence that they did not love God.

Candidly, there are a lot of fundamental Baptist preachers that I have little respect for, but I don't know of any full-blown fundamentalist Pharisees. We believe too much in grace and delight too much in God's free righteousness. There is hypocrisy, though, and there is an element of true legalism within the IFB movement. I have warned about this often. (See, for example, my new free eBook *THE TWO JACKS*, which is available at the Way of Life web site, www.wayoflife.org.)

While I can't speak for everyone, I can speak for myself. And I don't preach works for salvation and I don't preach works for sanctification. Everything is by God's grace and His grace alone. That might not come across in any one particular sermon, but it is clear in my thinking and in the overall perspective of my ministry. As for hypocrisy, I don't always live up to what I preach. Far from it, but I confess my sins to God (and to man when the situation necessitates) and don't pretend to any self-righteousness. I know at every moment that the only righteousness I have that is acceptable to God is in Christ and in Christ alone. That is not Phariseism.

We see in Matthew 23:23 that Christ did not rebuke the Pharisees for paying attention to the less weighty things in the law. He rebuked them for focusing on the lesser matters *to the neglect of* the weightier ones.

The Bible-believing "fundamentalists" that I know do not neglect the weightier matters of the New Testament faith. They aim, rather, to follow Paul's example and to give heed to "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). They preach the virgin birth, blood atonement, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and justification by grace and the Trinity and the personality of the Holy Spirit and the other "weightier" matters of the faith, but they also preach church discipline

(1 Cor. 5) and the restrictions upon the woman's ministry (1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34) and due order among men and women, which even touches on their hair styles (1 Cor. 11:1-16) and other things that are less weighty.

When a Christian today preaches against pop music and Hollywood's filth and calls for modest dress, he is called a Pharisee, but the Bible demands a very strict separation from the world, and this is *not* Phariseeism; it is New Testament Christianity. Following are just some of the commandments on this issue, and they are indeed commandments and not suggestions.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

Separation from the world by a born again, blood-washed, saved-by-grace-alone believer is not Phariseeism. It is obedience to God and conformity to His character and will.

The Pharisees were at the forefront of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and of the persecution of the early Christians.

It is a great slander to label a Christ-loving, Bible-honoring, grace-gospel-preaching, self-debasing, peace-loving Christian a Pharisee.

The modern Pharisee would be more akin to the Roman Catholic priest with his sacramental gospel and his traditions exalted to the place of Scripture and his long history of persecuting the saints. The ecumenical crowd doesn't call Catholic priests Pharisees, though. They don't seem to be concerned about all of the souls who have been led astray by these contemporary Pharisees.

The only men they seem to be concerned about are those dreadful old “fundamentalists” with their strong Bible

convictions and their refusal to smile at error. Oh, those dreadful fundamentalist Pharisees!

Forbidding Others

Mark 9:38-40 - “And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.”

Luke 9:49-50 - “And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.”

These passages are frequently abused by those who promote ecumenical fellowship and unity. When a preacher exposes the compromise and error of some Christian leader or movement, they protest that this is not God’s will and they cite these verses as evidence. They say, “Don’t you know that Christ said you should not forbid another professing Christian who is doing works in His name.”

We know that this is a misuse of Scripture because the Bible does not contradict itself. If the Lord Jesus Christ was saying in these passages that it is wrong to judge and expose error, He would be contradicting His own Word. Many other Scriptures describe the preacher’s responsibility to judge doctrine and to warn publicly of error and compromise. See, for example, Matthew 7:15; 16:6-12; 24:4-5; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 14:29; Galatians 1:8-9; Philippians 3:2; Colossians 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 1 Timothy 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; Titus 1:9-11; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 8-11; Jude 3; Revelation 2:6, 14, 15.

We know, therefore, that whatever the Lord Jesus Christ is saying in the aforementioned passages, He is *not* saying

that it is wrong to mark and expose the error and compromise of Christian leaders.

In truth Christ was forbidding the disciples to exercise ecclesiastical control over other men who claim to follow Him. He was warning against that natural impulse to control others. He was not saying that we cannot *reprove* another Christian; He was saying that we cannot *forbid* another Christian. These are completely different things.

The apostles had great authority to establish the first churches and to complete the canon of Scripture, but they did not have unlimited authority. They were not popes. Their objective was not to establish the kingdom of God by force. They could not bear the sword against those who refused to follow them. They could not exercise physical force against those they considered their enemies. They could not imprison them or beat them or confiscate their property or kill them or otherwise seek to “forbid” them to preach.

The Roman Catholic Church ignored this warning and claimed authority over all Christians. Rome attempted to forbid all men to serve Christ unless they served Him after the Roman Catholic fashion.

The preacher that exposes error is not trying to forbid other men to preach the gospel or to serve Christ. He is not exercising authority over anyone or persecuting anyone. He is merely doing what the Word of God requires; he is measuring men and movements by the Scripture.

When I warn of dangers I see in Billy Graham’s ecumenical crusades, for example, and I warn about how he has turned converts over to the Roman Catholic Church, I am not forbidding him to preach the gospel nor am I trying to exercise any type of authority over him. I can praise the Lord for every soul that is genuinely saved through the Billy Graham Evangelistic Crusade or any other movement. I do not try to stop them with force or by governmental

authority or through human deception. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

This does not mean, though, that I am going to ignore error. We must reprove heresy and compromise and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and to do so is not contrary to what Christ forbade.

Matthew 18

Oftentimes I am asked if I follow the guidelines of Matthew 18 before I publish a report.

For example, when I published an open challenge to Clarence Sexton about his Friendship Conferences, I received the following:

“I am deeply upset at the private letter you posted on your website to Dr. Sexton. Thanks for shooting your own and not calling Pastor Sexton personally to get all of the facts. I guess you don't read Matthew 18 all that often.”

The fact is that I did contact Pastor Sexton personally months before the publication of the article. As for Matthew 18, as we will see, it has nothing to do with the issue.

When I published a gentle warning about some of the newer *Patch the Pirate* music tapes years ago, I received notes from people asking if I had first approached Majesty Music. Following is one of these:

“I am writing to ask if you follow the principles of Matthew 18 when writing about a brother in Christ? Have you gone to Brother Hamilton about your concerns alone, before writing your critique? Did you find no satisfaction and take another brother in Christ with you? I recognize these are steps to be followed in a local church context, but it seems prudent and wise and God honoring to follow similar steps when dealing with brothers and sisters from other churches.”

Another man gave the same sort of challenge in regard to my warning about Chuck Swindoll:

“I have read your article on Chuck Swindoll. It is not our job to judge our fellow man. If you have concerns with Swindoll and his teachings then your job is to

confront him personally, speak to and with him, find out where he is coming from. If you still believe he is wrong then bring it before your eldership and let them confront. Then, and only then, if there is still no change, you bring it before the congregation, and then you leave it and him in God's hands."

In reality, Matthew 18 gives instructions for dealing with personal problems between Christians. It does not address how to deal with public teachings and actions by Christian leaders.

The apostle Paul, in the Pastoral Epistles, mentioned the names of compromisers and false teachers TEN times, warning Timothy about them. Those letters were not intended merely for Timothy and Titus. They were a part of the canon of Scripture and were a public record. There was nothing malicious in Paul's warnings. His motive was to protect godly preachers and sound churches.

Matthew 18, on the other hand, deals with personal trespasses between members of an assembly. Consider exactly what the passage says:

"Moreover if thy brother SHALL TRESPASS AGAINST THEE, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, TELL IT UNTO THE CHURCH: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:15-17).

Chuck Swindoll has not trespassed against me personally. That is not the issue, and it would be impossible to follow Matthew 18 in that type of situation. Even if I were to attempt to follow the first part of the passage in such a context, it would be impossible to follow the last part. I have

no way to take this issue “unto the church.” I am not a member of Swindoll’s church or Sexton’s church. Their churches have no authority over me, and I have no business with them (and I am sure they would ignore any attempt I might make to charge these men with error). Similarly, these men are not members of my church, so they have no business with it and it has no authority over him.

To attempt to follow Matthew 18 in such matters would be confusion.

Men such as Chuck Swindoll have published materials and distributed them widely to individuals and churches across the land. I am merely analyzing their published works in obedience to the Word of God. Material that is distributed publicly should be analyzed publicly.

Following are some of the Scriptures that give me authority for this practice:

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11).

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:15).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

By the way, my personal correspondence with Majesty Music was completely ignored, even though I approached them humbly as a friend who has advertised their music for many years without charge (and continues to do so with a

couple of caveats). Human nature does not like to be corrected, and the bigger the ministry the more inured it thinks itself to be from criticism.

What about John 17?

John 17:21 is one of the favorite Bible verses of the ecumenical movement, used by everyone from Billy Graham to the Pope:

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

Many claim that the unity for which Christ prayed is an ecumenical unity of professing Christians that disregards doctrine (since doctrine divides), but the words and context of John 17 destroys this myth.

In John 17, the Lord emphasizes that the unity He desires is one based on supernatural salvation and obedience to revealed truth. It is not a “unity in diversity” that ignores doctrinal differences for the sake of a broad tent.

The Unity of John 17 Is a God-created Unity

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are” (John 17:11).

There is nothing in Christ’s prayer to indicate that men are to do something to create the unity for which He prayed. *John 17 is a prayer addressed to God the Father, not a commandment addressed to men.* It is not something man needs to do; it is something God has already done. The prayer was answered 2,000 years ago. It is a *spiritual reality* that was created by God among genuine believers who are committed to the Scriptures, not a *possibility* that must be organized by man. Each born again child of God is adopted into the family of God and is a part of Christ’s kingdom.

In contrast, the ecumenical movement, even its most “evangelical” aspect, is careless about the gospel and

salvation. I have attended many ecumenical conferences with press credentials and have asked attendees, “When were you born again?” and more often than not I get an unscriptural answer. I get answers from people who are trusting in their good works or their baptism or their church membership or a “sinner’s prayer” or their mystical charismatic experiences or the fact that they “have always been a Christian.”

In my research on the emerging church in preparation for writing the book *What Is the Emerging Church?* in 2008, I read dozens of testimonies by emerging leaders, and most of them were unscriptural. (For documentation, see *What Is the Emerging Church?* chapter III “No Clear Testimony of Salvation,” available from www.wayoflife.org.)

Prominent evangelical leaders such as Rick Warren preach a shallow “gospel” that is not the gospel we find in Scripture. (See *Purpose Driven or Scripture Driven*, a free eBook available from www.wayoflife.org.)

Any unity that is a unity among those who aren’t clear on the gospel and haven’t experienced supernatural salvation is not the unity that Jesus was praying for in John 17.

The Unity of John 17 Is a Unity in Truth

“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and THEY HAVE KEPT THY WORD. ... For I have given unto them THE WORDS which thou gavest me; and THEY HAVE RECEIVED THEM, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. ... I have given them THY WORD; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ... Sanctify them through thy truth: THY WORD IS TRUTH. ... And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through THE TRUTH” (Jn. 17:6, 8, 14, 17, 19).

Christ emphasized that He was praying for those who love and obey the Word of God and keep its doctrine. The unity for which He prayed is a unity of those who earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

This is not a prayer that envisions the modern ecumenical crowd that downplays and ignores the Word of God for the sake of a broad, lowest-common-denominator “unity.” It is not a unity of all denominations with their multiplicity of heresies. It is not a prayer that envisions the New Evangelical crowd with its judge-not philosophy and its wrong-headed tendency to reduce “essential” doctrine to a short list of “fundamentals,” while downplaying the so-called “non-essentials” of God’s Word for the sake of peace and unity.

Gamaliel's Advice

Acts 5:38-39 - "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

Gamaliel was an unconverted Pharisee and God used him to deliver Peter and John from death, but he said a foolish thing which many Christians quote as gospel truth.

Gamaliel advised the Jewish rulers not to kill Peter and John who had been preaching Christ contrary to Jewish law.

Some use this to support the idea that it is not our business to rebuke sin or to expose false theology. We should leave that to God. Like Gamaliel, they say if the work is of God, it will prosper; if it is not, it will fail, so just leave it alone.

To cite Gamaliel as an authority, though, is to follow the philosophy of unsaved man. The Bible only quotes what Gamaliel said; it does not approve his statement.

It is not true that if a work be not of God, "it will come to nought." The Roman Catholic Church was not of God from its inception, but it has not come to nought. The Jehovah's Witnesses movement has not come to nought even though it denies Christ's deity and salvation by grace. The same is true for Buddhism and Hinduism and Mohammedanism and Spiritism and Mormonism.

It is unscriptural to say that we are to leave false things alone, because we are specifically commanded to deal with error.

Timothy was commanded, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20). Ephesians 5:11 says we are to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness.

Jude says we “should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

As the late John R. Rice said, “Some follow Gamaliel, but it would be far better if they would follow the Bible” (*Ecumenical Excuses for Unequal Yokes*).

The Tares

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:24-30).

This parable is misused by many who do not like the practice of reproof and separating from error. They say, “Christ taught us to ignore the tares until the time of harvest when the angels will sort things out. It is not our business today to separate the tares from the wheat.”

The parable is not referring to the churches, though. Christ plainly said “the field is the world” (verse 38).

The parable teaches that the ultimate and final separation of the saved from the unsaved can only be accomplished by God at the coming of Christ.

The parable forbids the type of thing that was practiced by the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, when Rome joined hands with the secular powers to enforce their ecclesiastical laws toward all men. Those who were deemed “heretics” were persecuted and even burned to death. This is forbidden by Christ’s parable and by many

other Scriptures. It is not the church's business to discipline the world.

It is the church's business, though, to discipline its own members. Heretics, after the first and second admonition, are to be rejected (Titus 3:10-11).

It also the business of the Christian to separate from false teachers (Romans 16:17; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 John 10-11).

The following is by the late Franklin G. Huling:

“The ‘Wheat and the Tares’ parable of Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, is also much misunderstood. First of all, our Lord is talking about the world, not His Church--‘the field is the world.’ He goes on to say that ‘the good seed are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one’ (Matthew 13:38). They are the two groups in the world, children of God--those who have received Christ (John 1:12), and the children of the devil--those who reject Christ (John 8:44).

“When any of the ‘children of the wicked one’ get into the professed church of Christ, as they have always done, a definite procedure for God's children is set forth in His Word. First, it is their duty to tell them that they have ‘neither part nor lot’ in Christ (see Acts 8:21-23 and context). If the children of the devil do not leave voluntarily, as is generally the case, God's children are commanded to ‘purge out’ these unbelievers (1 Cor. 5:7). But God's people have disobeyed His Word about this, and so unbelievers have gotten into control, as is now the case in most denominations.

“Therefore, those who purpose to be true to Christ and His Word are commanded to ‘come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord’ (2 Cor. 6:17), regardless of property or any other considerations. When we obey God's Word, we can

trust Him to take care of all the consequences of our obedience.”

Touch Not the Lord's Anointed

One of the many tactics that some Baptist preachers have used to remain above reproof and discipline is the misapplication of Scripture.

One of these is 1 Samuel 24:10, upon which is based the doctrine of "touch not God's anointed." David said,

"Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed."

The context has to do with killing an anointed king of Israel. Apparently some Baptist preachers think they are kings and that someone who reproves them is trying to kill them.

Jack Hyles certainly acted like a king and put himself above reproof and discipline, and so did Jack Schaap and many others who are following this exceedingly unscriptural, ungodly type of pastoral model.

But even an Israelite king was not above reproof. David didn't kill King Saul, but the prophet Samuel did not draw back from reproving the sorry old king, and the prophet Nathan did not draw back from reproving King David, and we could give many other examples.

A pastor is not an Israelite king, but even kings could be reproved by God's preachers. And so can pastors.

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:15).

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke,

exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

Stand Together or Hang Separately

The following is by Dennis Costella, Director of the Fundamental Evangelistic Association, Los Osos, California. Used by permission.

The expression “we will either stand together or we will hang separately” is often advanced by the new-evangelical, and sad to say even by some supposed fundamentalists, in an effort to justify unbiblical fellowships while opposing common enemies. Fundamentalists today join in common cause, not only with compromised brethren, but also with liberals and outright cultists to fight immorality, abortion or other evils. But has God suspended His guidelines for separation from whatever is contrary to doctrinal purity for the sake of added political or theological clout? No!

The fact remains, God will bless the testimony of a separated witness and will perform His will in and through it, rather than condone an alliance built upon compromise.

The notion that a visible unity wields more influence with the powers of this world is humanistic reasoning, not divine revelation. Stand true! Stand alone if need be! In so doing, you need never fear being “hung” by anyone as long as your sole confidence is in God, and not in the strategy of men.

God’s Word still declares that the source of power in opposing the evil of our day comes from absolute dependence on the arm of God, not on the concerted efforts of men. The biblical doctrine of separation is based on the premise that the holiness of God will never allow for the joining together of that which is true to the Word, and what is contrary to the Word in

a common cause, regardless of how righteous or needful it might appear to be.

The end does not justify the means in Christian ministry.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

(This study on standing together or hanging separately is by Dennis Costella, Director of the Fundamental Evangelistic Association, Los Osos, California. Used by permission.)

Shooting the Wounded

I have frequently heard the accusation that preachers who give warnings about Christian leaders are guilty of “shooting their own wounded.”

For example, I received the following e-mail that charged me with doing this in regard to an exhortation I published about Clarence Sexton’s Friendship Conferences.

“I am deeply upset at the private letter you posted on your website to Dr. Sexton. Thanks for shooting your own and not calling Pastor Sexton personally to get all of the facts.”

The fact is that I had sent that letter to Dr. Sexton via his own website months before I published it, and I received no reply. I found out later that he says that he doesn’t use e-mail, and that is fine, but he could have dictated a reply to one of his many co-workers or secretaries.

Another example of the accusation of “shooting the wounded” is contained in the following e-mail that I received a few years ago:

“I grew up in Murfreesboro, TN and was and am still associated with the Sword of the Lord and the Bill Rice Ranch. I hated it then and still do when a Christian brother bashes another Christian brother over things instead of preaching and trying to win souls to Christ. It is said that the Christian Army is the only army that stabs its wounded and kills off its own. I have to say it is very true. I am also a Marine, and we were taught to pick up those who are wounded and even dead, not leave them to die or to be mutilated by the enemy. We as Christians do just the opposite many times.”

What does “shooting their own wounded” mean?

If it means that Christians sometimes fail to be patient with the weak, we can all probably say that we have been guilty. If it means that Christians sometimes are too quick to criticize a fellow believer instead of trying to help him, it happens too often; and we need to be reminded that God is not pleased with such things.

If, on the other hand, “shooting the wounded” means that it is wrong for a preacher to warn about influential men who are teaching error or walking in compromise, it is unscriptural nonsense.

In my public warnings, I have never injured a wounded person and I have never shot anyone in any sense whatsoever. To charge me with doing so is to confuse biblical warning, reproof, and correction with assault.

I was in the army and I have studied the military and I understand the military, and what I am doing has absolutely nothing to do with shooting one’s own wounded.

The leaders that I warn about are not wounded! They are willfully and steadfastly committed to error or compromise in spite of having been warned, and they are influencing others.

By the way, they don’t mind “shooting” back!

The Lord Jesus Christ taught His people to beware of false prophets (Mat. 7:15). When a preacher obeys this command and attempts to mark and warn of false teachers, is he “shooting the wounded”? Of course not, but those he warns about and those who are sympathetic to them will charge him with doing so.

In 1 and 2 Timothy, the apostle Paul names the names of false teachers and compromisers 10 different times in his warnings (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17; 3:8; 4:10, 14).

All of the men that Paul warned about claimed to be Christians and it is likely that they felt that Paul was being unfair and mean-spirited in singling them out.

When Paul warned Timothy that Demas had abandoned him because he loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10), Paul was not shooting at a wounded man. Demas had been a minister of the gospel, a co-worker with Paul, but he made a willful choice to cast his lot toward the world. He had no excuse, and he was influencing others. Doubtless he had been warned, but he remained steadfast in his compromise. Note that Paul didn't say that Demas had left Christianity; he had only left Paul. This probably means that Demas was compromising his ministry with the world after the fashion of the doctrine of Balaam (Rev. 2:14) and the teaching of Jezebel (Rev. 2:20). It appears that he was one of the early proponents of an "emerging church," arguing that Paul's Christianity was too strict, too separatistic, too ineffective, and that we need to adapt ourselves to the world "a bit" to reach people.

The Lord has commanded the assemblies to exercise discipline toward unrepentant church members who are committed to gross sin and error (1 Corinthians 5; Titus 3:10, 11). Is that shooting the wounded? It is oftentimes considered to be so by those who are the objects of the discipline and by those who are sympathetic to them; but proper church discipline, though severe, is not destructive. It has the three-fold goal of glorifying Christ in His church, purifying the congregation, and bringing the sinner to repentance.

The Lord has instructed us to separate from those who are saved but are walking in disobedience (2 Thess. 3:6). Is that shooting the wounded?

It often happens that those who are disobedient mistake biblical correction for persecution and confuse biblical reproof with personal assault.

Paul rebuked sin in the churches in letters that were anything but private. His epistles to the individual churches were distributed among all the churches (Colossians 4:16).

Therefore, when Paul told of how that Demas had left him, having loved this present world, it was a public matter. When he rebuked the believers at Corinth for their sin and compromise and error, it was a public matter. When he warned of Alexander the Coppersmith, it was a public warning.

Some matters are private and they should be dealt with privately, but other matters are public and should be dealt with publicly.

If a man has a public ministry that influences others, that ministry should be critiqued publicly.

Evangelist Chuck Cofty is a highly decorated United States Marine officer who survived shocking battlefield experiences. Since he understands these matters, both from the side of the physical and of the spiritual, I asked him to reply to the accusation in the e-mail that I quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

Following is his reply:

“Dear Brother Cloud: To my knowledge you have not struck anyone violently or injured them by striking. He no doubt is referring to the many truths that appear in your writings as well as the writings of others concerning contemporary theology that you quote. Some, perhaps even this man, are so timid that when truth is revealed they find it difficult to accept and wind up tolerating error or ignorance for fear of offending someone. When men are named, places identified and error revealed, it is upsetting to those that are ‘moderate’ in their position. Brother Cloud, it is true that marines never leave their dead on the field of battle and will on occasion render aid to a wounded enemy. This however is situational and conditional as we will not allow such aid to encumber us, slow us down, deter us from our mission or jeopardize our success. Our desire to serve our dear Lord must be the

same. I personally think that this dear brother's analogy is poor and his accusation unfounded."

Pastor Wilbert Unger of Bethel Baptist Church, London, Ontario, observes:

"Was our Lord shooting the first century churches in Revelation 2 and 3 when He walked in their midst and exposed their sins and failures, and commanded them to repent? The kindest and most biblical thing a faithful servant of God can do is expose unscriptural conduct to lead to repentance, lest God step in and judge severely and chasten in a most severe manner. I think the worst chastening that we Independent Baptists could receive from the hand of God is if He would just leave us alone and let us go on in our compromise. We are so bent on exalting man and lightly esteeming the Word of God. One day, we will be like Samson when it is said, 'he wist not that the Lord had departed from him' (Judges 16:20). May God be gracious and wake us up to listen to the rebuke of those who see the error in our faith and practice. No man is above rebuke. May we come to see the love and grace in those who would be so kind as to rebuke us."

The Lord Looks on the Heart

“And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD’S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:6-7).

Those who are committed to the contemporary philosophy often use this verse as a proof text for their doctrine that the external is unimportant. The Christian rock crowd uses it to defend their habit of patterning their fashion and demeanor after secular rockers. “God looks on the heart,” they say, “so don’t worry about the outward appearance.”

But 1 Samuel 16:6-7 has nothing to do with dress. It has to do with one’s natural appearance; it has to do with stature and countenance. Samuel thought God had chosen Eliab, David’s oldest brother (1 Sam. 17:13, 28), to be the king because of his impressive appearance, but God told him that He does not select men for service based on how they look but on the condition of their hearts. This is still the basis upon which God calls men today. It doesn’t matter how tall a man is or how naturally distinguished he might look or how much of a natural leader he appears to be or how impressive his speaking voice. Physical characteristics are not God’s standard.

To use this verse to support the idea that it does not matter what a Christian wears or how he looks is to rip it out of its context and make it to say something that it does not even hint at.

In fact, the verse plainly states that man looks on the outward appearance, and it is for this very reason that dress

matters. The fact that man is very visual in his sexuality and is deeply enticed by the female figure means that dress matters. If a woman does not dress in a modest and holy manner but dresses rather in the attire of an harlot to emphasize her physical assets (Prov. 7:10), either by wearing too little clothing or by wearing her clothing so tight so that her figure is unduly highlighted, she is surely accountable for contributing to man's sinful lust (Mat. 5:28).

If God cares nothing about how His people dress, the Bible would say nothing about it, but in fact it does.

In the very beginning, after man sinned, God rejected his fig-leave aprons and clothed the man and the woman with coats (Gen. 3:7, 21).

The Mosaic Law forbade men and women to dress like the opposite sex.

“The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God” (Deut. 22:5).

The Bible forbids any sort of nakedness and defines it even as uncovering the leg and baring the thigh (Isa. 47:2-3).

The New Testament says Christian women are to dress modestly (1 Tim. 2:9). It says women should have long hair and men short hair (1 Cor. 11).

Indeed, the Lord looks on the heart, but man looks on the outward appearance, so let's be concerned with both.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

In Heaven Together

Many have written to challenge me with something along the lines of the following:

“You spend your time warning about this Christian and that Christian; don’t you realize that we will all be together in heaven? Why can’t we then get along on earth?”

The simple answer to this is that we will be perfected in heaven, but that certainly is not true on earth. In heaven there will be no false teaching or worldliness or spiritual compromise. There will be nothing to reprove.

Meanwhile, we aren’t in heaven yet. That is the sweet by and by, and we yearn to be there, but in the mean time we live in the nasty now and now.

And in the nasty now and now God has commanded us to earnestly contend for the faith and to reprove the works of darkness and to do many other things that we won’t be doing in heaven.

Liberty and Fun

In the name of “freedom,” people frequently leave good Bible-believing churches to join one of the looser, easy-going congregations that abound in these apostate times. Commonly, they are lackadaisical about church attendance, putting more emphasis upon personal and family relaxation and recreation, upon sports and the great outdoors and an endless variety of fun. They exchange their feminine dresses for pants and shorts and other immodest attire, even joining the near-naked crowd at the poolside and on the beaches. They trade the sacred hymns of the faith for jazzy charismatic “praise” music and Christian rock. They develop a more tolerant attitude toward doctrine, emphasizing, instead, “love” and “unity,” fellowshipping with anyone who “loves Jesus.” As they pursue this new path, their ecumenical sympathies and appetite for “liberty” increases, as does their aversion to biblical separation.

When asked about the change, they say: “I feel more *liberty* now, more *love*; I am having *fun*; I am glad to be free of *legalism*; I don’t hear *criticism* at my church; no one *judges* what others do. It’s a breath of fresh air. We’re finally free of Pharisaical bondage.”

Through the years, I have witnessed with sorrow a number of Christian friends who were captured in this fleshly trap.

They are confused about the nature of biblical Christianity, having been willfully enticed by the siren song of the “live according to your own lusts” philosophy of apostasy (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Consider the following Bible preachers whose sermons were recorded by divine inspiration. Would a person who focuses on liberty and fun be comfortable under such preaching?

James

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

John the Disciple

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

John the Baptist

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matt. 3:7-10).

Peter

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1 Peter 1:14-17).

Paul

“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:6-11).

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14).

These men do not sound like contemporary liberty-fun sort of guys, to me. They preached liberty from eternal destruction through the blood of Christ, but they did not preach liberty to live as one pleases.

The term “liberty” is used in both ways in the book of Galatians. Paul refers to the believer’s liberty from a works gospel (Gal. 2:4), but he warns of using Christian liberty as an “occasion for the flesh.”

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; ONLY USE NOT LIBERTY FOR AN OCCASION TO THE FLESH, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

The Christian has no liberty to walk in any type of unholiness, no liberty for moral looseness, no liberty to love

and conform to the world, no liberty to fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

To the liberty-fun Christian, his personal freedom is a fundamental issue in the decisions he makes about daily living. To the Bible-believing Christian, God's pleasure and the edification of God's people and the salvation of the unsaved is the fundamental issue.

There is no emphasis upon "fun" in the Bible. The emphasis is upon unquestioning obedience, extreme spiritual caution, dying to self and being devoted to God's perfect will, walking in the fear of God, spotless separation from the world. The Christian is depicted as a soldier in a war (2 Tim. 2:3-4). A good soldier is not motivated to exercise his "rights" to pursue liberty and fun; he is willing to make every necessary sacrifice and to obey every command so that the conflict might be won. Referring to the Christian life, an old song wisely says, "It's a battlefield, brother, not a recreation room, a fight and not a game."

The previously quoted Bible preachers sound like the "old-fashioned" Bible-believing men of God of past generations who railed against sin and error and called God's people to holiness and separation from this wicked world. The average contemporary Christian today is not comfortable under this type of preaching. If these holy men of old were to stand before them and preach the very things that are recorded in our Bibles, no doubt they would be labeled judgmental, fun-hating, mean-spirited legalists.

Sadly, those who are crying for liberty and fun are described in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 --

"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."

They search out teachers who will preach a more positive Christianity and who will encourage their idolatry of “fun” and their yearnings for carnal “liberty” in the pursuit of the fulfillment of their own lusts.

1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23

Someone might reply, “But Brother Cloud, aren’t you forgetting 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23?” Let’s consider the verses in their context:

1 Corinthians 6:12-13 -- “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.”

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 -- “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.”

These verses are frequently misused by those who desire liberty to fulfill their carnal desires. These would have us believe that the apostle Paul is saying the Christian has liberty to wear immodest clothing and to watch indecent movies and to romp near naked at the beach and for women to strut around in their tight pants and to immerse oneself in every sort of rock music and to fellowship closely with anyone who says he “loves Jesus” regardless of his doctrinal beliefs, etc.

Is that what Paul meant by the statement “all things are lawful unto me”? By no means! Obviously there are limitations to the Christian’s liberty, since the New Testament has so many warnings toward this end. We are not free to commit fornication (1 Cor. 6:16-18; 1 Thess. 4:3-6), nor to be involved in any sort of moral uncleanness

(1 Thess. 4:7), nor to fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11), nor to be drunk with wine (Eph. 5:18), nor to allow any corrupt communication to proceed out of our mouths (Eph. 4:29), nor to allow any filthiness of the flesh or spirit (2 Cor. 7:1), nor to be involved in anything that has even the appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22), nor to love the things that are in the world (1 John 2:15-17), nor to befriend the world (James 4:4), nor to be conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2), nor to dress immodestly (1 Tim. 2:9), etc.

What, then, did the apostle mean? He meant that the Christian has been set free by the blood of Christ, free from the wages of sin, free from the condemnation of the law, free from the ceremonies of the Mosaic covenant, *but not free to sin, and not free to do anything that is not expedient or edifying.*

The first rule of Bible interpretation is to interpret according to the context, and Paul explains himself perfectly in both passages. In 1 Corinthians 6:12-13, he uses the example of eating meat. In 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:23-28 he uses the example of eating things that have been offered to idols. In all such things, the Christian is free, because these are matters in which the Bible is silent. There are no dietary restrictions for the New Testament Christian as there were under the Mosaic Law. We do not have to fear idols; we know they are nothing. This is the type of thing Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians, if we would allow him to explain himself in context rather than attempt to put some strange meaning upon his words that would fill the Bible with contradiction.

Paul addresses the same thing in Romans chapter 14. The Christian is free from Old Testament laws pertaining to diet and keeping holy days (Rom. 14:2-6). We are not to judge one another in these matters, because these are matters on which Scripture is silent in this dispensation. This does not

mean, though, we are not to judge *anything* and that we are free to do whatever we please. When the Bible has spoken on any issue, our only liberty is to obey.

The contemporary philosophy is contrary to the entire tenor of the New Testament writings.

Four Tests for Christian Activities

In the two passages in Corinthians previously cited Paul gives four tests to determine whether the Christian should allow a certain thing in his life:

(1) Does it bring me under its power?

(2) Is it expedient?

(3) Does it edify?

(4) Does it help my fellow man or does it cause him to stumble?

These are tests that are applied not to sinful things which already are forbidden to the Christian, but to things the Bible does not specifically address.

The sincere application of these tests to things commonly allowed in the world of contemporary Christianity would put a quick stop to many practices. Rock music *does* bring people under its power; it does not edify; it is influenced by demons (a simple study of the history of rock music will confirm this); it is not therefore expedient for the Christian who is instructed to be sober and vigilant against the wiles of the devil; it further has an addictive power, appealing to the flesh which the Christian is supposed to crucify.

Immodest clothing, such as shorts and bathing suits, *does* hinder our fellow man by tempting him to sin in his thought life; it does not edify those who see us clothed in such a fashion; it does cause others to stumble.

Ecumenical relationships between those who believe sound New Testament doctrine and those who do not, hinders my fellow man and causes him to stumble by confusing him about what is true and what is false and by

giving him the impression that doctrine is not important. Such relationships are not edifying because they weaken the believer's spiritual discernment and zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints.

The Bible says we have liberty in Christ, liberty from eternal condemnation, liberty to serve God and to enjoy our unspeakably wonderful salvation in Christ. It does not say, though, that we have *liberty to do anything that is not expedient or edifying*.

The apostle Paul had such a low view of "personal liberty" that he was willing to forego the eating of meat for the rest of his life if he thought that such eating would offend his brother or cause his brother to stumble in any way (1 Cor. 8:13). He did not have the idea that he was in this world to live for himself and to stand on his liberty.

Contrast this apostolic view of Christian liberty with that which is so popular today. Those who are consumed with their "liberty" will not forego even highly questionable things for the sake of glorifying Christ and edifying their fellow man. When confronted with such things, they become puffed up and lash out against a straw man they call "legalism." They mock those who are offended by their music and ridicule those who question their silly antics.

A Slippery Slope

Dear friends, beware of this trap. It is a slippery slope. Once you have begun to fight for your "liberty" and pursue fun, **where do you stop?** If you accept the lie that the very concept of drawing a line for Christian standards is "legalistic" and that the emphasis of the Christian life should be upon "liberty," **you have no boundaries. We have seen repeatedly that there is no stopping. Those who enter this path are on a backward, downward spiral.**

At first the women fight for the "liberty" to wear loose pants, but eventually they are wearing tight pants. They

fight for the “liberty” to wear loose-fitting shorts, but eventually they are wearing shorter and tighter ones. They want the liberty to miss some church services, but eventually they are missing many and thinking nothing of it. They want the liberty to shorten their hair, but eventually they style it almost like a man’s. They want the liberty to listen to border-line jazzed-up praise music, but eventually they are addicted to contemporary rock. They want the liberty to watch some questionable videos, but eventually they are watching R-rated ones and beyond. They want the liberty to fellowship with “very conservative evangelicals,” but eventually they are fellowshipping with those who hold damnable heresies. Or at least they become sympathetic with and defensive of those who are doing such things.

You do not lose anything by holding the strictest line of Biblical standards in this present evil world, but you have much to lose if you loosen those standards.

One thing those who let down their standards often lose is their children to the world.

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; ONLY USE NOT LIBERTY FOR AN OCCASION TO THE FLESH, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

“As free, and NOT USING YOUR LIBERTY FOR A CLOAK OF MALICIOUSNESS, but as the servants of God” (1 Peter 2:16).

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

All Things to All Men

In 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul said, “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

If this is isolated from the rest of Scripture one could assume that Paul was willing to do anything to reach the lost, including adopting their lifestyle, which is a popular principle among the “Christian rock” crowd today.

However, when one examines the context of this verse and compares Scripture with Scripture, we find that Paul did not mean anything like this.

In 1 Corinthians 9:21, for example, Paul says, “*To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*”

Thus, he explains that he is always under the law to Christ and he is therefore never at liberty to do things that would be contrary to Scripture.

For example, Paul would not adopt long hair in order to reach the heathen, because Christ’s law says long hair is a shame (1 Cor. 11:14). He would never conform to the world, because God’s Word forbids this (Rom. 12:2).

And in 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul says, “*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*”

Thus, Paul was always strict in his Christian living and did not allow anything that would result in the possibility of becoming spiritually shipwrecked. He always kept his body in subjection.

In Galatians 5:13 he says, “*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*”

Thus, Paul's liberty was not the liberty to serve the flesh in any sense, and this principle alone would mean that Paul would avoid the vast majority of things that fly under the banner of the pop culture today.

One of the first fleshly things that God dealt with me about after I was saved in the summer of 1973 was rock & roll. In my estimation, it is one of the most powerful fleshly things in society today. Steven Tyler of Aerosmith testified that rock music "is the strongest drug in the world" (*Rock Beat*, Spring 1987, p. 23), and LSD guru Timothy Leary added his amen to that, admitting, "I've been STONED ON THE MUSIC many times." My own experience with rock & roll agrees with these testimonies, and I am confident that those who believe that rock can be sanctified for the service of a holy God are deceived.

Paul also taught that believers are to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). This is the strictest form of separation, and Paul would not have done anything contrary to this in his own life and ministry.

In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul is definitely not providing a defense for the Christian rock & roll philosophy and there is no possibility that he would have adopted such a lifestyle.

Jeremiah warned, "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2), and Paul would certainly not have tattooed himself and grown his hair long and adopted pagan music and dress and posture in order to reach the pagans.

Down with Denominational Walls

One of the theme songs of the ecumenical movement is “God is destroying denominational lines.”

This was one of the goals of the Promise Keepers movement. At the Promise Keepers Clergy Conference in Atlanta in February 1996, the more than 39,000 pastors were urged to commit themselves to the “Atlanta Covenant,” one of the points of which urges pastors to reach beyond racial and DENOMINATIONAL barriers.” Promise Keepers founder Bill McCartney made the following statement at this conference: “Contention between denominations has gone on long enough. If the church ever stood together, Almighty God would have his way.”

This is a gross error that ignores the apostasy of our time and the reason for such divisions, as well as the Bible’s commands to separate from error.

The “Breaking Down Denominational Walls” Mentality Ignores Apostasy

This thinking sounds good to this itching-ear generation (2 Timothy 4:3-4), but it ignores the wretchedly apostate condition of a great many of the denominations.

Evangelical leader Harold Lindsell gave this testimony in regard to the mainline denominations:

“It is not unfair to allege that among denominations like Episcopal, United Methodist, United Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. THERE IS NOT A SINGLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY THAT TAKES A STAND IN FAVOR OF BIBLICAL INFALLIBILITY. AND THERE IS NOT A SINGLE SEMINARY WHERE THERE ARE NOT FACULTY MEMBERS WHO DISAVOW ONE OR MORE OF THE MAJOR TEACHINGS OF THE

CHRISTIAN FAITH” (Harold Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, Zondervan, 1976, pp. 145-146.)

“Apostasy” refers to the falling away from the true New Testament faith, and it is not a figment of a “fundamentalist’s” imagination; it is a Bible doctrine. The New Testament describes two separate streams of “Christianity” operating side by side throughout the church age.

First, there are sound New Testament churches, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. They will be persecuted, hated, despised, yet they will continue holding to the New Testament faith century-after-century until Christ’s return. The Lord Jesus promised His faithful ones: “Lo, I am with you always, EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD” (Matthew 28:20).

Second, there are apostate churches, which will increase in number and grow worse and worse as the centuries pass. Consider the following Scriptures:

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).

“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).

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Peter. 2:1-3).

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4).

The parables of Christ in Matthew 13 depict the course of this present “church age” and describe a progression of apostasy. The parable of the leaven in Matthew 13:33, for example, describes a woman putting leaven into three measures of meal, “*till the whole was leavened.*” Leaven in Scripture always stands for sin and error (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). Thus the parable tells us that the error that was introduced by false teachers even during the days of the

apostles will gradually increase through the centuries until the entire religious system is leavened. The ultimate fulfillment of this is in Revelation 17.

Another passage that teaches the same truth is 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8. *“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”*

The “mystery of iniquity” is that program of evil whereby the devil is attempting to corrupt the churches of Jesus Christ by sowing tares and apostasy. It is associated with “Mystery Babylon the Great” in Revelation 17. The “mystery of iniquity” was already working in Paul’s time, and it will culminate in the rise of the man of sin, the Wicked One, the Antichrist, who will assume the throne of this world for a brief span. We are informed that the culmination of this will not occur until just prior to the return of Christ, because the Wicked One will be destroyed “with the brightness of his coming.”

We see the direct fulfillment of these prophecies in “Christianity.” It is clearly witnessed in heretical bodies such as the Roman Catholic Church and the liberal Protestant and Baptist denominations associated with the World Council of Churches. It is also evident in the ecumenical movement, which is calling for unity in diversity at the expense of biblical truth and which is breaking down the walls of separation between truth and error.

Modernism and apostasy and terrible compromise have permeated the mainline denominations. Any call, therefore, to breach denominational barriers today, is a call to yoke truth together with error and is an open denial of the biblical doctrine of separation.

The “Breaking Down Denominational Walls” Mentality Ignores the Importance of Bible Doctrine

The push to “break down denominational walls” also ignores the fact that denominational differences are largely doctrinal differences, and the Bible exalts doctrinal purity. The Scripture was first given for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16).

While some divisions between Christians are man-made and unnecessary, many others--most, in fact--are doctrinal.

Why, for example, is an Episcopal church different from an independent Baptist church? The answer is that they have different doctrine. One teaches baptismal regeneration; the other, that baptism is symbolic only. One baptizes infants; the other practices believer’s baptism. One sprinkles; the other immerses. One has a priesthood; the other has pastors and deacons. One has a hierarchical church structure; the other practices the autonomy of the assembly. One interprets prophecy literally and is looking for the imminent return of Jesus Christ; the other interprets prophecy allegorically and is working to establish the kingdom of God on earth. One allows its leaders and members to hold every sort of heresy and immorality; the other (generally speaking) practices discipline and separation.

What is the difference between an Assemblies of God congregation and an independent Baptist church? Again, it is doctrine. One believes the baptism of the Holy Spirit is subsequent to salvation and is something the believer must seek and that its manifestation is tongues-speaking; the other believes the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred at Pentecost and that every believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit when he is saved. One believes the sign gifts are operative today; the other believes the sign gifts were given to the apostles and ceased with their passing. One believes the Holy Spirit “slays” people; the other, that “spirit slaying” is unscriptural. One believes the gift of tongues is operative

today; the other, that the gift of tongues had a temporary purpose that ceased in the first century. One believes salvation can be lost; the other, that salvation is eternally secure. One believes ecumenical unity is the work of the Holy Spirit; the other believes ecumenical unity is the work of the devil.

Those who call for the breaking down of denominational walls are ignoring these serious doctrinal differences. Any Bible doctrine worth believing is worth fighting for.

When Paul wrote to Timothy to instruct him in the work of the Lord, he did not tell him to “lighten up” and to ignore “less important” or “non-essential” doctrinal differences. Paul solemnly instructed the young preacher to remain absolutely steadfast in apostolic doctrine and not to allow ANY other doctrine to be taught.

“As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach NO OTHER DOCTRINE” (1 Timothy 1:3).

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, THE SAME commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

Every believer is instructed to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). There is not a hint here or anywhere else in Scripture that some part of the Christian faith is of such little importance that it is to be disregarded for the sake of a broader unity.

The ecumenical attitude toward doctrine and the push to “break down denominational” walls is not scriptural and must be rejected.

Those who have the most to lose from the ecumenical call to dissolve denominational walls are those whose doctrine is based upon the Word of God.

Can We Be Sure of Doctrinal Purity?

Doctrine is often downplayed today in favor of unity. The following statement by pop singer Pat Boone, who is a charismatic Christian, typifies the popular attitude toward doctrine:

“Doctrine divides, experience unites. We don’t all have our doctrine all completely correct, but God doesn’t judge us on our understanding of doctrine” (Pat Boone, August 17, 2001, cited from *Calvary Contender*, Sept. 15, 2001).

Boone claims that no one is completely right about doctrine and that God doesn’t judge us about doctrine; therefore, let’s just focus on unity. This idea is widely held. Many have written to me and said in effect, “Who do you think you are? Do you believe that your doctrine is right and everyone else’s is wrong? You can’t know that.”

But this is not what the Bible says.

The Bible says the believer *CAN* know sound doctrine.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 the believer is commanded to rightly divide the Word of God.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

To rightly divide the Word of Truth means to interpret it properly and to know its doctrine correctly. Why would God require a Christian to rightly divide the Word of Truth unless He would give him the ability to do that?

This verse further teaches that God *will* hold the believer accountable for this task, because only the one who rightly divides the word of truth is approved. This points to the Judgment seat of Christ.

The Bible tells us exactly how we can know correct doctrine.

1. We know sound doctrine through obedience.

The Lord Jesus Christ gave the following promise in regard to knowing sound doctrine: *“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself”* (John 7:17). To know sound doctrine one must be willing to obey the truth. If a man is receptive to the truth and is willing to obey what God shows him, the Lord will give him wisdom so that he will be able to discern sound doctrine from false. In Proverbs 1:23, God says, *“Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.”* God has promised to make His truth known to those who submit themselves to Him. This is the essence of repentance.

2. We know sound doctrine through continuing in God’s Word.

The Lord Jesus made another promise in regard to knowing the truth, as follows, *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:31-32). This precious promise clearly states that a child of God can know the truth. To do so, he must continue in God’s Word. This means he must read it, study it, memorize it, love it, and seek to obey it.

3. We know sound doctrine through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

1 John 2:20-21 says, *“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.”* Verse 27 says further, *“But the*

anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

Thus the Scripture plainly states that the believer has the Holy Spirit to teach him and he can thereby know the truth if he walks in fellowship with the Spirit.

If the unity philosophy is correct and a believer cannot be certain of sound doctrine, the commandments and promises of God have become of no effect.

Loving Jesus

The unity movements claim that all those who “love Jesus” and “believe the gospel” should be able to fellowship and work together, but there is a serious problem with this principle. It ignores the fact that there are false christs and false gospels. Almost 2,000 years ago the apostle Paul warned of this danger:

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

The Corinthian church was careless and carnal and tolerant of error, and Paul was afraid that if false teachers came to them with “another spirit” and preached “another Jesus” or “another gospel,” they would put up with them instead of separating from them. It was not that they would necessarily follow or accept the error; it was that they would be tolerant of it.

This is a perfect description of those who are committed to the unity principle today. Instead of testing everything carefully by the Word of God and plainly exposing false christs and false gospels, they glory in their “unity in diversity.”

A perfect example of this is the March for Jesus rallies which are held annually in many countries and which seek to draw together all professing Christians for a united “testimony for Jesus.”

Marty Klein, the national coordinator for March for Jesus in Canada in 1996, testified that Mormons were welcome to participate.

Alan Sharpe of Ottawa wrote to Klein on May 2 of that year and asked, "I am interested in the March for Jesus. Can a devout Mormon who loves Jesus march in the march?"

Klein replied: "ALL are welcome to join us. However, we make it clear that this is a march FOR Jesus. It is not a protest--we are not promoting anything, but a person (Jesus) and we will not allow Christians or otherwise to parade their various causes."

Sharpe wrote again on May 11 and asked for confirmation about Mormons participating in March for Jesus. He said:

"If I want to call myself a good Mormon then I must believe what the elders teach, that Lucifer is Jesus' brother, and that Jesus was a polygamist, and that His wives included Mary and Martha (the sisters of Lazarus) and Mary Magdalene. This is all orthodox Mormonism. ... Can a devout Mormon who believes these things but loves Jesus and wants to praise him still march in the March for Jesus?"

Klein replied: "NO ONE KNOWS what is going on in one's heart except God and that person. Jesus told us if we believe on him and keep his commandments--if we have a personal encounter with him and KNOW we are indwelt by his Spirit then we ARE his children. IN ANY EVENT, I STILL MAINTAIN that ALL are welcome to join us. However, we make it clear that this is a march FOR Jesus. It is not a protest--we are not promoting anything, but a person (Jesus) and we will not allow Christians or otherwise to parade their various causes." (emphasis in the original)

This statement demonstrates an incredible ignorance of the Word of God and of the essence of true Christianity.

Consider some of the false christs that are in the world today:

1. The Wafer Jesus who is worshipped in the Roman Catholic mass.

2. The Mormon Jesus who was Lucifer's brother and a polygamist.

3. The Modernist Jesus who was not born of a virgin.

4. The Unitarian Jesus who was not God.

5. The Universalist Jesus who will not send anyone to Hell.

6. The Prosperity Jesus who was wealthy.

7. The Laughing Jesus who "slays" people with his spirit and causes them to laugh uncontrollably and to stagger like drunk men.

8. The Self-esteem Jesus who never called man a sinner and who came merely to build up his self-image.

9. The Revolutionary Jesus who was the founder of Liberation Theology.

10. The Shack Jesus who is cool and non-judgmental and whose Father is a woman.

11. The Hindu Jesus who learned to be "the christ" at the feet of gurus.

12. The Islamic Jesus who did not die for man's sins.

These are just a few of the false christs in the world today. Beware of those who refuse to expose false christs and false gospels. It is impossible to love the true Jesus revealed in Scripture without hating false ones. Those who claim that God has called them to preach only a positive message and not to enter into theological controversy are greatly deceived. They are rebels to the clear commandments of God.

"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought,

but that we receive a full reward. WHOSOEVER TRANSGRESSETH, AND ABIDETH NOT IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, HATH NOT GOD. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 7-9).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort YOU THAT YE SHOULD EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

In Essentials Unity

The modern evangelical philosophy is often stated by the dictum, “In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity.”

Though commonly attributed to Augustine, it was apparently first stated by the 17th-century Lutheran Rupertus Meldenus (a.k.a. Peter Meiderlin).

It became the rallying cry of the Moravians, who had a wonderful missionary zeal but retained such Romanist heresies as infant baptism and an ordained priesthood and who promoted unity above the absolute truth of God’s Word.

The “essentials unity” principle was adopted by the fundamentalist movement of the first half of the 20th century. Fundamentalism focused on a unity built around “the fundamentals of the faith” while downplaying “minor issues.” The pragmatic objective was to create the largest possible united front against theological modernism.

This has been a hallmark of the Southern Baptist Convention as well. In describing why he is glad to be a Southern Baptist, Pastor Ben Simpson says, “I’m captivated by the commitment to unity in the essentials and mission of Christ while allowing diversity in the nonessentials and methodology” (“Two Divergent Views from Young Pastors,” Baptist Press, April 14, 2011).

SBC leaders David Dockery, Timothy George, and Thom Rainer express the prevailing philosophy in the following words:

“Though I may disagree with some on secondary and tertiary issues, I will not let those points of disagreement tear down bridges of relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ. ... We need a new spirit of mutual respect and humility to serve together with

those with whom we have differences of conviction and opinion. It is possible to hold hands with brothers and sisters who disagree on secondary and tertiary matters of theology..." (*Building Bridges*, 2007, pp. 11, 34).

This dictum has been an integral philosophy of New Evangelicalism. They might stand for ten or twenty or thirty "cardinals," but they refuse to make an issue of the WHOLE counsel of God. Particularly when it comes to one's associations, they believe that there are "non-essentials" that should not get in the way of unity.

Many Independent Baptists are now buying into this heresy.

The Independent Baptist Friends International conference in 2010, hosted by Clarence Sexton of Crown College, was based on this premise, that such things as the Bible text issue, dress, music, Calvinism, modes and candidates of baptism, and separation from the SBC are "non-essentials" that should not hinder fellowship and associating together for the sake of evangelism and world missions.

In his book *Thinking Outside the Box*, Independent Fundamental Baptist (IFB) leader Charles Keen said:

"I'm a slow learner, but I finally realized that not all truth is of equal value. Some truths I differ from others and divide over even die for (as least I should). With others, I might be uncomfortable with how they are handled by my brethren, but I can still fellowship with them either personally or in some cases, ecclesiastically. We need to develop some 'ecumenicalism within the parameters of fundamentalism.' ... Let's decide who the enemies of the cross are and divide from them. Then let's decide who the friends of grace are and tolerate them. We don't have to unite but we do need unity" (p. 81).

Clayton Reed of Southlake Baptist Church, Southlake, Texas, and head Global Church Planters, in his paper on “Ecclesiastical Separation,” says we should not separate over non-fundamentals. He quotes John Rice in saying that we should work with those who disagree on baptism, tongues, prophecy, election, association with SBC. Reed concludes, “We ought to join every willing, warm-hearted Christian in advancing our Lord’s kingdom while it is day.”

Kevin Bauder, president of Central Baptist Seminary in Minnesota, praises “conservative evangelicals” in his blog and promotes the “non-essential” philosophy:

“Conservative evangelicalism encompasses a diverse spectrum of Christian leaders. John Piper, Mark Dever, John MacArthur, D. A. Carson, Al Mohler, R. C. Sproul ... These individuals and organizations exhibit a remarkable range of differences, but they can be classed together because of their vigorous commitment to and defense of the gospel” (*In the Nick of Time*, Bauder’s blog, March 2010).

In a mailing to its alumni announcing its February 2011 National Leadership Conference, Calvary Baptist Seminary of Lansdale, Pennsylvania, stated:

“We should grant each other the freedom to hold differing viewpoints and to refrain from caustic letter-writing campaigns to or about those with whom one might differ. ... in our zeal to earnestly contend for the faith, fundamentalism became more concerned about MINOR ISSUES and less concerned about what the Bible clearly presents as THE MAJORS” (Aug. 25, 2010).

The “minor issues” are alleged to be such things as which Greek text or English translation to use, dress standards, musical styles, election, and baptism. We are told that such things should not determine fellowship. The seminary used this philosophy to explain why they invited Ed Welsh, a

Presbyterian, as a speaker to their annual National Leadership Conference in 2009 and New Evangelical Southern Baptist Mark Dever in 2010. (Dever's church, Capitol Hill Baptist in Washington, D.C., is a member of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, which is partnered with the very liberal American Baptist Church, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Baptist World Alliance.)

There is no support in the Bible for the "in non-essentials liberty" doctrine. It is a man-made heresy created to further a pragmatic objective.

Consider the Old Testament law. Its requirement was summarized in Deuteronomy 27:26, which Paul cited as follows -- "Cursed is every one that continueth not in ALL things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). To foist a "non-essential" philosophy on the law of Moses would destroy its effectiveness to convict of sin and to be the schoolmaster to lead to Christ (Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:24).

There is no "non-essential" philosophy in the New Testament, either.

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to teach their converts "to observe ALL things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat. 28:20).

The apostle Paul reminded the elders at Ephesus that the reason he was free from the blood of all men was that he had preached the WHOLE counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

The more plainly and fervently you preach the whole counsel of God, the less likely it will be that you will join hands in ministry with those who hold different doctrine.

Paul instructed Timothy to keep the truth "without SPOT, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:14). A spot is a small, seemingly insignificant thing. That particular epistle contains commandments about such things as the woman's role in

ministry, which is widely considered a “non-essential” today. Paul taught Timothy to have an entirely different approach toward such teachings.

In 1 Corinthians 11:2 Paul said to the church at Corinth, “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in ALL things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.” This passage deals with hair length and the Lord’s Supper, which are widely considered to be “non-essentials,” yet Paul praised the church for remembering him in ALL things.

We know that not all doctrine has the same significance and weight, but none of it is “non-essential” in any sense.

I challenge anyone to show me where the Scripture encourages the believer to treat some doctrine as “non-essential” or to “stand for the cardinal truths and downplay the peripherals.”

Some try to use Romans 14 to support this philosophy, but Romans 14 does not say that some Bible doctrine is non-essential. It says that we are to allow one another liberty *in matters in which the Bible is silent!* The examples that Paul gives to illustrate his teaching are diet and keeping of holy days. Those are things that the New Testament faith is silent about. There is no doctrine of diet in the New Testament, so it is strictly a matter of Christian liberty.

This reminds us that the only true “non-essential” is a personal opinion not based solidly upon Scripture.

Jude instructed every believer to “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). As Jude did not delineate what part of the faith is to be defended, the obvious meaning is that we should defend whatever aspect of the faith is under attack at a particular time.

Since the Bible doesn’t identify a “non-essential” doctrine, who is to say what this might be?

The fact is that once an individual adopts the “non-essentials” philosophy, his list of “non-essentials” tends to

grow as time passes and as his associations broaden. It is a slippery slope.

The Five Fundamentals

Some have concocted a position that fundamentalism historically was not separatistic, but was merely a belief in “the five fundamentals.” That this is a serious perversion of history is evident from the following facts.

We must note at the outset that fundamentalism has never been a monolithic movement. It has taken many different forms. There have always been those who have worn the fundamentalist label who have shied away from the heat of the battle, who have refused to obey the Word of God and separate from error. Describing fundamentalism is a little like the ant describing the elephant. There are many aspects to fundamentalism and describing the movement depends somewhat upon one’s perspective. Even so, to claim that fundamentalism was NOT characterized by militancy for truth, to claim that fighting and separating have NOT been a significant aspect of historic fundamentalism, is to fly in the face of history.

1. That historic fundamentalism was more than the affirmation of “the five fundamentals” is stated by its historians.

George Marsden gives this overview:

“By the 1930s, then it became painfully clear that reform from within could not prevent the spread of modernism in major northern denominations, MORE AND MORE FUNDAMENTALISTS BEGAN TO MAKE SEPARATION FROM AMERICA’S MAJOR DENOMINATIONS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH. Although most who supported fundamentalism in the 1920s still remained in their denominations, many Baptist dispensationalists and a few influential Presbyterians were demanding separatism” (Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the*

New Evangelicalism, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, p. 7).

George Dollar, one of the few historians of the fundamentalist movement to write from the standpoint of a genuine fundamentalist, gives this definition:

“Historic fundamentalism is the literal interpretation of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-biblical affirmations and attitudes” (Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, 1973).

Dollar divides fundamentalism into three periods. From 1875-1900 conservative leaders raised the banner against Modernism within the denominations. From 1900-1935 these struggles resulted in men leaving their denominations to form separate churches and groups. “They were the architects of ecclesiastical separation.” From 1935-1983 the second generation Fundamentalists continued the battle from outside of the mainline denominations and also contended against the New Evangelical movement. It is plain that this historian, who gave a significant portion of his life to the examination of these matters, identifies historic fundamentalism with earnest militancy and biblical separation.

David O. Beale, who also has written a history of fundamentalism from a fundamentalist perspective, gives this definition:

“The essence of Fundamentalism ... is the unqualified acceptance of and obedience to the Scriptures. ... The present study reveals that pre-1930 Fundamentalism was nonconformist, while post-1930 Fundamentalism has been separatist” (Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850*, Bob Jones University Press, 1986, p. 5).

I offer one further illustration of the definition of fundamentalism used by its historians. John Ashbrook has deep roots in the fundamentalist movement. His father, William, was brought to trial by the Presbyterian denomination because of his stand against Modernism. After his separation from Presbyterianism, William Ashbrook established an independent fundamentalist church. He wrote an incisive book on New Evangelicalism entitled *Evangelicalism: The New Neutralism*. The first edition of this work appeared in 1958. His son, John, after a period of toying with New Evangelicalism as a young man, became a solid Fundamentalist leader in his own right. His book *New Neutralism II: Exposing the Gray of Compromise* is, in this author's opinion, one of the best books on this subject. In looking back over the fundamentalist movement since the 1930s, John Ashbrook defines fundamentalism in this way:

“Fundamentalism is the militant belief and proclamation of the basic doctrines of Christianity leading to a Scriptural separation from those who reject them” (Ashbrook, *Axioms of Separation*, nd., p. 10).

Those who deny the militancy and separation of historic fundamentalism are trying to rewrite history. Instead of admitting that they have repudiated biblical fundamentalism and have compromised the Word of God and adopted New Evangelicalism, these revisionists are trying to redefine fundamentalism to fit their backslidden condition.

2. That historic fundamentalism was more than the affirmation of “the five fundamentals” is proven by the existence of New Evangelicalism.

If it were true that historical fundamentalism was merely a stand for “the five fundamentals,” the New Evangelical

movement of the 1940s would have made no sense, because New Evangelicalism has always held to “the five fundamentals.” In fact, Harold Ockenga, one of the fathers of New Evangelicalism, said that there are at least several dozen fundamentals!

It was not a stand for “the five fundamentals” that New Evangelicals protested. The keynote of New Evangelicalism was the repudiation of the separatism and other “militant aspects” of old-line fundamentalism, which proves that old-line fundamentalism was typically characterized by these things.

In *Reforming Fundamentalism*, which is a history of Fuller Theological Seminary, historian George M. Marsden makes it plain that Fuller’s early leaders were consciously rejecting the negative aspects of old-line fundamentalism. The title of Marsden’s book itself is evidence of the militant character of historic fundamentalism.

It is clear to honest historians that fundamentalism fifty years ago was characterized by MILITANCY, by a willingness to deal with the NEGATIVES, and by SEPARATION, and it was this fact that produced the New Evangelical reaction against fundamentalism.

3. That historic fundamentalism was more than the affirmation of “the five fundamentals” is acknowledged by historic fundamentalist organizations and publications.

Consider *The Fundamentalist*, published by J. Frank Norris, an influential fundamental Baptist leader. Independent Baptist historian George Dollar described Norris’s *The Fundamentalist* in this way:

“*The Fundamentalist* alarmed and alerted ... Reading the 1920-1930 back issues of *The Fundamentalist*, one can almost see the smoke and hear the battle cries of those times” (Dollar, *The Fight for Fundamentalism*, published by the author, 1983, p. 3).

Norris's paper is representative of that generation of fundamentalism in that it was a generation noted for its bold militancy for the truth.

Consider the following definition of fundamentalism that was given by the World Congress of Fundamentalists, which met in 1976 in Usher Hall, Edinburgh, Scotland:

A Fundamentalist is a born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who--

1. Maintains an immovable allegiance to the inerrant, infallible, and verbally inspired Bible.
2. Believes that whatever the Bible says is so.
3. Judges all things by the Bible and is judged only by the Bible.
4. Affirms the foundational truths of the historic Christian Faith: The doctrine of the Trinity; the incarnation, virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection and glorious ascension, and Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; the new birth through regeneration by the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the saints to life eternal; the resurrection of the ungodly to final judgment and eternal death; the fellowship of the saints, who are the body of Christ.
5. Practices fidelity to that Faith and endeavors to preach it to every creature.
6. Exposes and separates from all ecclesiastical denial of that Faith, compromise with error, and apostasy from the Truth.
7. Earnestly contends for the Faith once delivered.

The Congress summarized its definition this way: "Fundamentalism is militant orthodoxy set on fire with soulwinning zeal."

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this study, many varying definitions of fundamentalism have been given through the years, and the truth of the matter is that fundamentalism has taken a great variety of forms. In fact, we have no interest in being party to fundamentalism as a movement, since it has been interdenominational in perspective and has compromised the Word of God for the sake of a broader unity. When we use the term “fundamentalist” to describe ourselves, we are referring to it as a synonym for a separatist stance and scriptural militancy.

We close with the words of G. Archer Weniger, who showed the fallacy of the view that fundamentalism is merely a concern for “the five fundamentals”--

“The five fundamentals have only to do with the Presbyterian aspect of the struggle with modernism. ... The bulk of Fundamentalism, especially the Baptists of every stripe who composed the majority by far, never accepted the five fundamentals alone. The World’s Christian Fundamentals Association, founded in 1919, had at least a dozen main doctrines highlighted. The same was true of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship, which originated in 1920. A true Fundamentalist would under no circumstances restrict his doctrinal position to five fundamentals. Even Dr. Carl F.H. Henry, a New Evangelical theologian, listed at least several dozen doctrines essential to the Faith. The only advantage of reducing the Faith down to five is to make possible a wider inclusion of religionists, who might be way off in heresy on other specific doctrines. It is much easier to have large numbers of adherents with the lowest common denominator in doctrine” (G. Archer Weniger, quoted in *Calvary Contender*, April 15, 1994).

A Limited Message

The following important challenge is by the late Pastor David Nettleton and was published by the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches in 1968 as a reprint from the December 1955 issue of the *Baptist Bulletin*. Nettleton was President of Faith Baptist Bible College, Ankeny, Iowa, from 1965-1980. The sermon was one of a series of reports that were published in the 1960s to express the GARBC's "core values" at the time. Sadly, there has been a collapse of separatism within this association over the last couple of decades and the following message no longer represents their guiding principle, though it still represents solid biblical truth. Many good churches and pastors left the GARBC because of its slide away from scriptural separation.

A Limited Message or a Limited Fellowship

by David Nettleton

"I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
Acts 20:27

This message, like many, is born out of an experience. It may be some others are going through similar experiences. Therefore, let me recount the one which brought this message to light.

I was brought up as a Presbyterian. I was saved at a college which was interdenominational in student body, but was managed by the Church of the Brethren. From there I went to a seminary which was not a denominational school, and from there to another seminary which was United Presbyterian. I entered the Baptist pastorate with no Baptist training

except that which came from reading of the Scriptures.

A few years later I was drawn into an interdenominational youth movement and was given the leadership of a local Saturday night rally. I cooperated with any who were evangelical, regardless of their associations. I was advised by top leaders in the movement to seek the names of outstanding modernists for my advisory committee. I didn't do that. But I did follow advice which led me to send to all converts back to the churches of their choice, churches I knew to be liberal in some cases. This greatly troubled my conscience and I prayed and thought about it.

Another problem connected with this work was the failure on my part to instruct any converts on the matter of Christian baptism, which in the Scriptures is the first test of obedience. I felt that I should do this inasmuch as Peter and Paul did it. But how could it be done when on the committee of the work there were close friends who did not believe it? By such an association I had definitely stripped my message and my ministry of important Bible truths which many called "nonessentials."

In the follow-up work it was not convenient to speak of eternal security in the presence of Christian workers who hated the name of the doctrine. Thus the ministry was pared down to the gospel, just as if there was nothing in the Great Commission about baptizing converts and indoctrinating them. I had found the least common denominator and I was staying by it. But my conscience had no rest. Then it was that Acts 20:27 came to mean something to me.

The great apostle had never allowed himself to be drawn into anything which would limit his message. He could say with a clean conscience, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to

declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Why cannot many say that today? In my case, and in many other cases, it was due to a desire to teach a larger audience and to work with a larger group of Christians. Many have been carried away from full obedience by a noble-sounding motto which has been applied to Christian work. “In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things charity.” Some things are not essential to salvation but they are essential to full obedience, and the Christian has no liberty under God to sort out the Scriptures into essentials and nonessentials! It is our duty to declare the whole counsel of God, and to do it wherever we are.

Paul had a wonderfully balanced ministry. In his preaching he would never please men, for he knew he could not be pleasing to God if he tried to please men. Yet in his living he testified, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). “Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor. 10:33). What a happy balance this is in the ministry! It is true, humble, and wholesome.

Today we are choosing between two alternatives. A LIMITED MESSAGE OR A LIMITED FELLOWSHIP. If we preach all of the Bible truths, there are many places where we will never be invited. If we join hands with the crowds, there will be limiting of the message of the Bible. Bear this in mind--it is the Baptist who lays aside the most! It is the fundamental Baptist who makes the concessions! Think this through and you will find it to be true. We believe in believer's baptism. We believe in separation. We preach eternal security. We believe in the imminent coming of Christ. We consider it an act of obedience to reprove unbelief in religious circles. The Sadducee and the Pharisee are to be labeled. But according to a present philosophy we

must lay these things aside for the sake of a larger sphere of service.

Which is more important, full obedience or a larger sphere of service? And yet I do not fully believe these are the only two alternatives. It is our first duty to be fully obedient to God in all things, and then to wait upon Him for the places of service. It may be that we will be limited, and it may be that we will not. Charles Haddon Spurgeon did not travel as widely as some men of his day, but his sermons have traveled as far as the sermons of most men.

I have recently read a religious article by a great evangelist. He deplores the moral conditions in America. He deplores the conditions in our schools. He speaks against the liquor traffic and against juvenile delinquency. But nothing is said against America's greatest enemy--THE MODERN BELIEF WHICH GOES FORTH FROM SUPPOSEDLY CHRISTIAN CHURCHES. The strength of the nation lies in her love of God. That love has grown cold in many churches, and Jesus Christ our Lord is called an illegitimate child, a confused young man and a dead teacher. That kind of thing needs to be rebuked at the cost of reputation and even at the cost of life, if need be. But as soon as it is rebuked, the man who rebukes it will lose the majority of his following, if he is gaining that following through cooperation with modernistic churches.

It is my belief that some of our great evangelists today are thorough Bible-believing Christians. They accept nearly every truth in the Book. It seems they refrain from preaching all the counsel of God for one reason. To them, it is important to reach farther even if we reach with a smaller message. The breach within so-called Protestantism today is as great as the breach between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. We need to make this fact known. But every time we

promote the inclusive type of ministry we are covering up a fact that needs to be known.

God has given us a great message to preach. It contains the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it is not limited to that gospel. He has commissioned us to preach the gospel, baptize our converts and indoctrinate them (Matt. 28:19-20). He has given us the very best system of follow-up work, which is the building of Bible-believing churches and joining converts to them. He is calling us to loyalty and obedience.

We need no new message. We need no new method. We need only the spirit of obedience found in Paul when he testified, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Balance

Through the years I have been challenged at times to be more “balanced.”

A few years ago I asked preachers on my mailing list to write and let me know if they are edified by my ministry. More than 200 replied in a matter of days and most were overwhelmingly positive. Yet three or four said that they appreciated the material, but they wished it was more “balanced.”

What does this mean? As I have meditated and prayed about this matter, the following thoughts come to mind in regard to defining “balance” biblically:

1. Balance means preaching the whole counsel of God.

Paul reminded the elders at Ephesus that he had declared to them “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). This is the job of every preacher, but particularly of a pastor or a church planter. Every part of the Bible, every doctrine, is important. No preacher has the liberty to say “I will preach some doctrines, but the rest I am not responsible for,” or “I will just preach the gospel,” or “I will just focus on this particular topic” (the family, creation science, Bible versions, separation, contemplative mysticism, etc.).

Ever since God called me to preach, I have always been convinced of the importance of preaching and contending for the whole counsel of God. For our church planting ministry in South Asia I developed a Bible school curriculum to train preachers. We train them in the whole counsel of God. In 1993, I completed the *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*, which deals with every doctrine and nearly every word of the Bible. The book *Things Hard to Be Understood*, which we published in 1997, also seeks to deal with everything in the Word of God,

including the most difficult parts. Our *One Year Discipleship Course* is the most thorough one in print, to my knowledge.

If balance means preaching the whole counsel of God, I am balanced.

Careful readers will note that even via the Fundamental Baptist Information Service we deal with a very wide variety of doctrines and issues. The current event items are not selected haphazardly. We do not emulate the Religious News Service in attempting to cover every major current event in “Christendom” or in the ecumenical or denominational worlds. One of our chief goals is to select events that illustrate doctrinal truths which are being attacked. We do not merely report on events and personalities and books and speeches. We analyze these with the Word of God and sound doctrine. We deal with the gospel, justification, the church, sanctification, prophecy, Christian living, biblical inspiration and preservation, and countless other aspects of biblical truth. We focus on the things that we feel are at the forefront of the devil’s attack upon the truth and upon New Testament churches today.

2. Balance means fulfilling the Great Commission.

The term “Great Commission” is not in the Bible, but there was a “great commission” given by the risen Christ to the apostles and through them to the churches. It is emphasized by the Holy Spirit in that it is repeated five times (Matthew 24; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20; Acts 1). This commission is to preach the gospel to every creature and every nation, to baptize and disciple those who believe, which entails establishing sound New Testament congregations wherever the Word of God is spread. This commission is to be perpetuated until Christ returns. It is the general marching orders for the churches. We see the Great Commission fulfilled and exemplified in the lives of the apostles. They did not get entangled in political activity

or in building social-justice movements. They gave themselves exclusively to the preaching of the gospel and the founding of churches that would perpetuate this Commission. Every God-called preacher is under obligation to give himself to the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

There is a “balance” defined for us here. Every preacher is to be busy preaching the gospel. Every preacher is to be busy discipling converts. Every preacher is to be involved in the establishment of sound churches. This does not mean that any one man will not be focused more or less on certain parts of the Commission. Gifts and calling are different. Philip the evangelist focused on the preaching of the gospel (Acts 8:5-40), while Barnabas focused on the establishment of the new disciples (Acts 11:19-26), but this is not to say that Barnabas did not preach the gospel to the unsaved or that Philip did not disciple believers. No preacher can say that God has not called him to evangelize the lost or that God has not called him to disciple the saved. No preacher has the authority to ignore the New Testament church and go about evangelizing or discipling apart from the church.

To be “balanced” means the preacher is seeking to do the whole work of the Great Commission.

If all I did was write articles for the Fundamental Baptist Information Service, and I did not seek to take the gospel to the unsaved and to disciple Christians and to be a fruitful member of a New Testament church, I would not be balanced. I do all of these things, though, and I always have. Obviously the Fundamental Baptist Information Service and *O Timothy* magazine take much of my time, but they are only two of the things I do. I believe this is what has kept my thinking and ministry on a very practical level. Theorizing and “theologizing” doesn’t interest me, because it doesn’t help anyone in a practical sense. I want to preach

something that will help people. Preaching the Word of God for decades in one of the world's poorest countries and in county jails tends to keep one's feet on the ground.

3. Balance means fulfilling all of the responsibilities of the Christian life.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from ALL filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in ALL goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph. 5:7-8).

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in ALL manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15).

“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in ALL things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2).

Notice the “all” in each of the previous verses. Balance, therefore, would surely involve obedience to every duty God has laid out for us in the New Testament Scriptures. That is a tall order! It means seeking to be pure in thought and deed and speech, walking in the light, confessing one's sins. It means being a good father, a good mother, an obedient child. It means loving the brethren, being patient with the weak, submitting to governmental authorities, praying for all men. It means being a dedicated and fruitful church member, preaching the gospel to every creature, earnestly contending for the faith. It means keeping oneself unspotted from the world. The list is as long as the New Testament faith. Is any Christian really “balanced” in fulfilling all of the responsibilities of the Christian life? Not by a long shot, but that must be our goal.

4. Balance depends on a man's gift and calling.

A survey of the Bible reveals that God calls different men to different things and he gifts them differently. This is true in the New Testament churches. There are a number of gifts and callings described in Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; 1 Timothy 3; and 1 Peter 4. A pastor's gift and calling and focus will not be the same as that of an evangelist or a missionary church planter. We don't believe there are prophets in the churches today in the same sense as in the apostolic times; there is no revelation being given today; but I believe there is a prophetic gift still given in the sense of applying the Word of God to these present times. The term "prophecy" is used in a general sense in 1 Corinthians 14:3, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

The point here, though, is not to define the various gifts and callings, but merely to note the fact that there are differences. Certainly this gets at the heart of the mysterious and allusive matter of "balance." A "balanced" ministry for an evangelist is not the same as a "balanced" ministry for a pastor or missionary church planter, etc. Even among pastors or elders there are significant differences in gifts and personalities and vision and many other things that result in differences in "balance."

My calling has always been along what I consider to be the prophetic, meaning the application of the Word of God to these times, of discerning the apostasy of these last hours, of calling God's people to repentance, of understanding the broad scope and the end result of various movements rather than merely the narrow focus of what these are actually attempting to accomplish today.

During our early years as missionary church planters in South Asia, I entered unwittingly into an intensive firsthand course in end-time apostasy and ecumenism by my experiences with various "Christian" groups and

movements and churches in that part of the world. To my knowledge we were the only “fundamentalist” type missionaries in Nepal at that time. There was no like-minded fellowship. We did the best we could to get along with the various organizations and churches that existed, but it was difficult, both for us and for them! I preached a couple of times at the invitation of Campus Crusade for Christ and several times under the auspices of the Nepal Christian Fellowship, but there were conflicts because of our differing views of doctrine and ministry and Christian living.

For example, I was invited to teach a day-long series of messages to a group of national pastors, and I chose Titus as my outline. The book begins with God’s standards for pastors, and after we dealt with that section one of the men approached me and asked what I thought about a pastor having three wives. I reminded him that we had just seen that God’s Word requires that a pastor be the “husband of one wife,” so that settles the matter. He then told me that one of the pastors in attendance had three wives, so I brought the matter up in the next session, and the polygamist stood up and justified his action by claiming that God had called him through a vision. Instead of standing for God’s Word, the men supported the unqualified pastor and got upset at me for “causing trouble.”

Eventually a group of Christian leaders, including the head of Campus Crusade for Christ, the head of Youth for Christ, and the head of the Nepal Bible Society, held something like an ecclesiastical trial, brought charges against me of “dividing the “body of Christ in Nepal,” and demanded that I “stop all ministry” and “leave the country as soon as possible.” We didn’t leave, but you can see that things were not going smoothly between us and the ecumenical brethren! I learned a lot from those amazing experiences. (Bear with me; I am moving toward my point.)

When I first began publishing *O Timothy* magazine in 1984, I traveled to Serampore University (founded by the famous Baptist missionary William Carey) near Calcutta, India, and recorded an interview with the head of the seminary. The man was also a professor of New Testament theology. He told me that there are a number of ways to become a Christian: be baptized, be born into a Christian home, etc. The one way he did NOT mention was to be born again through personal faith in the finished atonement of Jesus Christ. He told me that he believed Hindus and Buddhists would go to heaven if they were sincere in their own faith. Soon afterward, I published the interview in *O Timothy* magazine (it can be found in the *Fundamental Baptist Digital Library* under the year 1984). The man wrote me an angry letter, rebuking me for printing this. I had explained to him exactly who I was and why I wanted to interview him, and he had allowed the tape recorded interview, yet he was upset when his own words appeared in print.

I learned through this and other experiences during those days that it is common for false teachers and compromisers to attempt to hide things, to be less than forthright about their positions, to believe and do things in their ministries that are not reported to their supporters, etc. I learned that in order to know the truth about many things in “Christianity” one has to dig for the facts, that the truth is not always out in the open and things are not always as they appear.

As I was reading my Bible in those days I came upon the passage in Ezekiel 8:5-18, in which Ezekiel was instructed to dig into the wall of the temple to observe things that were being done in secret by the apostate religious leaders. I was convinced that this is exactly what God wants me to do. I must “dig into the wall” and observe the false and wicked things of apostate and compromised Christianity and rebuke those things with God’s Word and report them to

God's people in order to protect them from error and duplicity. I must read their writings and interview them and analyze them and find out the truth of what they really believe.

This is part of my calling. It is not always pleasant; it is not something very many men should do; but it is essential for the protection of the churches.

At that time I started a section in *O Timothy* called "Digging in the Walls" which continues to this day. And the Fundamental Baptist Information Service, which features reports that we publish by e-mail, is more or less the "Digging in the Walls" section of *O Timothy* magazine in a daily electronic format.

This is an essential part of my focus and calling. This does not mean that I ignore the whole counsel of God; it simply means that my focus is different than that of some other God-called men.

If a pastor preached only the type of things that I publish in "Digging in the Walls" or the Fundamental Baptist Information Service, he would be unbalanced. This is not the type of thing I preach a lot in my church planting work.

5. Balance depends on the circumstance.

Finally, balance has a lot to do with the particular circumstance in which a preacher finds himself.

Noah "preached righteousness" for 120 years as the ark was being constructed. Was Noah balanced? The people who heard him preach probably didn't think so. He was too negative.

Jeremiah was terribly negative toward Israel. Was Jeremiah balanced? Of course he was. He was preaching exactly what God told him to preach, and he was preaching exactly what apostate, backsliding Israel needed to hear.

What about Amos or Jonah? What about John the Baptist? He lived out in the wilderness and preached

repentance, repentance, repentance. Was he balanced? Not by man's standards, but he was balanced by God's. He was preaching exactly what God told him to preach and he was preaching exactly what his hearers needed to hear.

Likewise, the circumstance will somewhat determine the "balance" of a man's ministry.

You see this in the New Testament epistles. The message given to each church depended upon its particular condition. If a church is becoming worldly and carnal and is in a moral tailspin, should a preacher ignore this and preach about something else? By no means! The condition of his people will largely determine what he needs to preach and what he needs to be doing.

Am I "balanced"?

Are you, fellow preachers, "balanced"?

There is only one absolute measure for that. The measure is not whether your "negative" preaching is *balanced* by an equal amount of "positive" preaching.

The measure is not what some other preachers are doing or what some group of people thinks about your ministry.

The measure is not evangelical church growth principles.

The measure is not some man's idea of what a preaching ministry should be.

The sole measure is the Holy Scriptures and the perfect will of God for me and my life and ministry. Only the Holy Spirit can guide a man in the "balance" for his life and ministry.

Be balanced, brethren!

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BIBLE TIMES AND ANCIENT KINGDOMS: TREASURES FROM ARCHAEOLOGY. ISBN 978-1-58318-121-8. This is a package consisting of a book and a series of PowerPoint and Keynote (Apple) presentations which are a graphical edition of the book. The PowerPoints are packed with high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips. Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms is a course on Bible geography, Bible culture, and Bible history and has a two-fold objective: to present apologetic evidence for the Bible and to give background material to help the student better understand the setting of Bible history. We cover this fascinating history from Genesis to the New Testament, dealing with the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10, the Tower of Babel, Ur of the Chaldees, Egypt, Baal worship, the Philistines, the Canaanites, David's palace, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Ahab and Jezebel, the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrian Empire, Hezekiah and his times, Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, Herod the Great and his temple, the Roman rule over Israel, and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Many of the archaeological discoveries from the past 200 years, which we relate in the course, are so fascinating and improbable that they read like a novel. It is easy to see God's hand in this field, in spite of its prevailing skepticism. The course also deals with Bible culture, such as weights and measures, plant and animal life, Caesar's coin, the widow's mite, ancient scrolls and seals, phylacteries, cosmetics, tombs, and the operation of ancient lamps, millstones, pottery wheels, and olive presses. The course begins with an overview of Israel's geography and a timeline of Bible history to give the

student a framework for better understanding the material. Each section includes maps to help the student place the events in their proper location. The course is packed with important but little-known facts that illuminate Bible history and culture. The preparation for the book is extensive, the culmination of 40 years of Bible study, teaching, and research trips. In this context the author built a large personal library and collected information from major archaeological museums and locations in North America, England, Europe, Turkey, and Israel. We guarantee that the student who completes the course will read the Bible with new eyes and fresh enthusiasm. 500 pages book + DVD containing 19 PowerPoint presentations packed with more than 3,200 high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips.

THE BIBLE VERSION QUESTION ANSWER DATABASE. ISBN 1-58318-088-5. This book provides diligently-researched, in-depth answers to more than 80 of the most important questions on this topic. A vast number of myths are exposed, such as the myth that Erasmus promised to add 1 John 5:7 to his Greek New Testament if even one manuscript could be produced, the myth that the differences between the Greek texts and versions are slight and insignificant, the myth that there are no doctrines affected by the changes in the modern versions, and the myth that the King James translators said that all versions are equally the Word of God. It also includes reviews of several of the popular modern versions, including the Living Bible, New Living Bible, Today's English Version, New International Version, New American Standard Version, The Message, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. 423 pages.

THE FOREIGN SPIRIT OF CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP MUSIC. This hard-hitting multi-media video presentation, published in March 2012, documents the frightful spiritual compromise, heresy, and apostasy that permeate the field of contemporary worship music. By extensive documentation, it proves that contemporary worship music is impelled by "another spirit" (2 Cor. 11:4). It is the spirit of charismaticism, the spirit of the latter rain, the spirit of the one-world church, the spirit of the

world, the spirit of homosexuality, and the spirit of the false god of The Shack. The presentation looks carefully at the origin of contemporary worship in the Jesus Movement of the 1970s, examining the lives and testimonies of some of the most influential people. Nearly 60 video clips and hundreds of photos are featured. It is available on DVD and as an eDownload from the Way of Life web site.

THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE. ISBN 978-1-58318-172-0. One of the many reasons why the Bible is the most amazing and exciting book on earth is its prophecies. The Bible unfolds the future in great detail, and *The Future According to the Bible* deals in depth with every major prophetic event, including the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Tribulation, the Antichrist, Gog and Magog, the Battle of Armageddon, the Two Witnesses, Christ's Return, Muslim nations in prophecy, the Judgment of the Nations, the resurrection body, the conversion of Israel, the highway of the redeemed, Christ's glorious kingdom, the Millennial Temple, the Great White Throne judgment, and the New Jerusalem. The first two chapters deal at length with the amazing prophecies that are being fulfilled today and with the church-age apostasy. Knowledge of these prophecies is essential for a proper understanding of the times and a proper Christian worldview today. The 130-page section on Christ's kingdom describes the coming world kingdom in more detail than any book we are familiar with. Every major Messianic prophecy is examined. Prophecy is a powerful witness to the Bible's divine inspiration, and it is a great motivator for holy Christian living. In this book we show that the Lord's churches are outposts of the coming kingdom. The believer's position in Christ's earthly kingdom will be determined by his service in this present world (Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21). The book is based on forty years of intense Bible study plus firsthand research in Israel, Turkey, and Europe.

INDEPENDENT BAPTIST MUSIC WARS. ISBN 978-1-58318-179-9. This book is a warning about the transformational power of Contemporary Christian Music to transport Bible-believing Baptists into the sphere of the end-time

one-world “church.” The author is a musician, preacher, and writer who lived the rock & roll “hippy” lifestyle before conversion and has researched this issue for 40 years. We don’t believe that good Christian music stopped being written when Fanny Crosby died or that rhythm is wrong or that drums and guitars are inherently evil. We believe, rather, that Contemporary Christian Music is a powerful bridge to a very dangerous spiritual and doctrinal world. The book begins by documenting the radical change in thinking that has occurred among independent Baptists. Whereas just a few years ago the overwhelming consensus was that CCM was wrong and dangerous, the consensus now has formed around the position that CCM can be used in moderation, that it is OK to “adapt” it to a more traditional sacred sound and presentation technique. The more “conservative” contemporary worship artists such as the Gettys are considered safe and their music is sung widely in churches and included in new hymnals published by independent Baptists. As usual, the driving force behind this change is the example set by prominent leaders, churches, and schools, which we identify in this volume. The heart of the book is the section giving eight reasons for rejecting Contemporary Christian Music (it is built on the lie that music is neutral, it is worldly, it is ecumenical, it is charismatic, it is experienced-oriented, it is permeated with false christs, it is infiltrated with homosexuality, and it weakens the Biblicist stance of a church) and the section answering 39 major arguments that are used in defense of CCM. We deal with the popular argument that since we have selectively used hymns by Protestants we should also be able to selectively use those by contemporary hymn writers. There are also chapters on the history of CCM and the author’s experience of living the rock & roll lifestyle before conversion and how the Lord dealt with him about music in the early months of his Christian life. The book is accompanied by a DVD containing two video presentations: The Transformational Power of Contemporary Praise Music and The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music. 285 pages.

KEEPING THE KIDS: HOW TO KEEP THE CHILDREN FROM FALLING PREY TO THE WORLD. ISBN 978-1-58318-115-7. This book aims to help parents and churches

raise children to be disciples of Jesus Christ and to avoid the pitfalls of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The book is a collaborative effort. It contains testimonies from hundreds of individuals who provided feedback to our questionnaires on this subject, as well as powerful ideas gleaned from interviews with pastors, missionaries, and church people who have raised godly children. The book is packed with practical suggestions and deals with many issues: Conversion, the husband-wife relationship, the necessity of permeating the home with Christian love, mothers as keepers at home, the father's role as the spiritual head of the home, child discipline, separation from the pop culture, discipleship of youth, the grandparents' role, effectual prayer and fasting. Chapter titles include the following: "Conversion," "The Home: Consistent Christian Living and the Husband-Wife Relationship," "Child Discipline," "The Church," "Unplugging from the Pop Culture," "Discipleship," "The Grandparents," "Grace and the Power of Prayer." 531 pages.

MUSIC FOR GOOD OR EVIL. This video series, which is packed with photos, video and audio clips, has eight segments. I. Biblical Principles of Good Christian Music. II. Why We Reject Contemporary Christian Music. It is worldly, addictive, ecumenical, charismatic, shallow and man-centered, opposed to preaching, experience-oriented, and it weakens the strong biblicist stance of a church. III. The Sound of Contemporary Christian Music. In this section we give the believer simple tools that he can use to discern the difference between sensual and sacred music. We deal with syncopated dance styles, sensual vocal styles, relativistic styles, and overly soft styles that do not fit the message. IV. The Transformational Power of Contemporary Worship Music. We show why CCM is able to transform a "traditional" Bible-believing church into a New Evangelical contemporary one. Its transformational power resides in its enticing philosophy of "liberty" and in its sensual, addictive music. We use video and audio to illustrate the sound of contemporary worship. V. Southern Gospel. We deal with the history of Southern Gospel, its character, its influence, and the role of the Gaithers in its renaissance. This section is packed with audio, video, and photos. VI. Marks of Good Song Leading.

There is a great need for proper training of song leaders today, and in this segment we deal with the following eight principles: Leadership, preparation, edification, spirituality, spiritual discernment, wisdom in song selection, diversity. One thing we emphasize is the need to sing worship songs that turn the people's focus directly to God. We give dozens of examples of worship songs that are found in standard hymnals used by Bible-believing churches, but typically these are not sung properly as "unto God."

VII. Questions Answered on Contemporary Christian Music. We answer 15 of the most common questions on this subject, such as the following: Is rhythm wrong? Isn't this issue just a matter of different taste? Isn't the sincerity of the musicians the important thing? Isn't some CCM acceptable? Didn't Luther and the Wesleys use tavern music? What is the difference between using contemporary worship hymns and using old Protestant hymns?

VIII. The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music. This presentation documents the frightful spiritual compromise, heresy, and apostasy that permeate the field of contemporary praise. Through extensive documentation, it proves that contemporary worship music is controlled by "another spirit" (2 Cor. 11:4). It is the spirit of charismaticism, the spirit of the "latter rain," the spirit of Roman Catholicism and the one-world "church," the spirit of the world that is condemned by 1 John 2:16, the spirit of homosexuality, and the spirit of the false god of The Shack. The presentation looks carefully at the origin of contemporary worship in the Jesus Movement of the 1970s, examining the lives and testimonies of some of the most influential people. 5 DVDs.

ONE YEAR DISCIPLESHIP COURSE, ISBN 978-1-58318-117-1. This powerful course features 52 lessons in Christian living. It can be broken into sections and used as a new converts' course, an advanced discipleship course, a Sunday School series, a Home Schooling or Bible Institute course, or for preaching outlines. The lessons are thorough, meaty, and very practical. There is an extensive memory verse program built into the course, and each lesson features carefully designed review questions. Following are some of the lesson titles (some subjects feature multiple lessons): Repentance, Faith, The Gospel,

Baptism, Eternal Security, Position and Practice, The Law and the New Testament Christian, Christian Growth and Victory, Prayer, The Armor of God, The Church, The Bible, The Bible's Proof, Daily Bible Study, Key Principles of Bible Interpretation, Foundational Bible Words, Knowing God's Will, Making Wise Decisions, Christ's Great Commission, Suffering in the Christian Life, The Judgment Seat of Christ, Separation - Moral, Separation - Doctrinal, Tests of Entertainment, Fasting, Miracles, A Testing Mindset, Tongues Speaking, The Rapture, How to Be Wise with Your Money, The Believer and Drinking, Abortion, Evolution, Dressing for the Lord. 8.5X11, coated cover, spiral-bound. 221 pages.

THE PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS: THE HISTORY AND THE ERROR. ISBN 1-58318-099-0. The 5th edition of this book, November 2014, is significantly enlarged and revised throughout. The Pentecostal-charismatic movement is one of the major building blocks of the end-time, one-world "church," and young people in particular need to be informed and forewarned. The author was led to Christ by a Pentecostal in 1973 and has researched the movement ever since. He has built a large library on the subject, interviewed influential Pentecostals and charismatics, and attended churches and conferences with media credentials in many parts of the world. The book deals with the history of Pentecostalism beginning at the turn of the 20th century, the Latter Rain Covenant, major Pentecostal healing evangelists, the Sharon Schools and the New Order of the Latter Rain, Manifest Sons of God, the charismatic movement, the Word-Faith movement, the Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Pentecostal prophets, the Third Wave, and recent Pentecostal and charismatic scandals. The book deals extensively with the theological errors of the Pentecostal-charismatic movements (exalting experience over Scripture, emphasis on the miraculous, the continuation of Messianic and apostolic miracles and sign gifts, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire, tongues speaking, physical healing guaranteed in the atonement, spirit slaying, spirit drunkenness, visions of Jesus, trips to heaven, women preachers, and ecumenism). The final section of the book answers the question: "Why are people deluded by Pentecostal-

Charismatic error?” David and Tami Lee, former Pentecostals, after reviewing a section of the book said: “Very well done! We pray God will use it to open the eyes of many and to help keep many of His children out of such deception.” A former charismatic said, “The book is excellent and I have no doubt whatever that the Lord is going to use it in a mighty way. Amen!!” 487 pages.

A PORTRAIT OF CHRIST: THE TABERNACLE, THE PRIESTHOOD, AND THE OFFERINGS. ISBN 978-1-58318-178-2. (new for 2014) This book is an extensive study on the Old Testament tabernacle and its priestly system, which has been called “God’s masterpiece of typology.” Whereas the record of the creation of the universe takes up two chapters of the Bible and the fall of man takes up one chapter, the tabernacle, with its priesthood and offerings, takes up 50 chapters. It is obvious that God has many important lessons for us in this portion of His Word. Speaking personally, nothing has helped me better understand the Triune God and the salvation that He has purchased for man, and I believe that I can guarantee that the reader will be taken to new heights in his understanding of these things. Everything about the tabernacle points to Jesus Christ: the design, the materials, the colors, the court walls and pillars, the door into the court, the sacrificial altar, the laver, the tabernacle tent itself with its boards and curtains and silver sockets, the tabernacle gate, and veil before the holy of holies, the candlestick, the table of shewbread, the incense altar, the ark of the covenant, the high priest, and the offerings. All is Christ. The tabernacle system offers brilliant, unforgettable lessons on Christ’s person, offices and work: His eternal Sonship, His sinless manhood, His anointing, His atonement, His resurrection glory, His work as the life and sustainer and light of creation, His eternal high priesthood and intercession, and His kingdom. In addition to the studies on every aspect of the tabernacle, *A Portrait of Christ* features studies on the high priest, the Levitical priests, the five offerings of Leviticus, the day of atonement, the ransom money, the red heifer, the cherubims, strange fire, the golden calf, leprosy, the Nazarite vow, the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, and the transportation of the tabernacle through the

wilderness. The tabernacle is very practical in its teaching, as it also depicts believer priests carrying Christ through this world (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Like the Israelites in the wilderness, believers today are on a pilgrimage through a foreign land on the way to our eternal home (1 Pet. 2:11). Don Jasmin, editor of the *Fundamentalist Digest* says, "This new book on the Tabernacle constitutes the 21st-century classic treatise of this rich theme." 420 pages.

SEEING THE NON-EXISTENT: EVOLUTION'S MYTHS AND HOAXES. ISBN 1-58318-002-8. This book is designed both as a stand alone title as well as a companion to the apologetics course AN UNSHAKEABLE FAITH. The contents are as follows: Canals on Mars, Charles Darwin and His Granddaddy, Thomas Huxley: Darwin's Bulldog, Ernst Haeckel: Darwin's German Apostle, Icons of Evolution, Icons of Creation, The Ape-men, Predictions, Questions for Evolutionists, Darwinian Gods, Darwin's Social Influence. The **ICONS OF EVOLUTION** that we refute include mutations, the fossil record, homology, the peppered moth, Darwin's finches, the fruit fly, vestigial organs, the horse series, the embryo chart, the Miller experiment, Archaeopteryx, bacterial resistance, the big bang, and billions of years. The **ICONS OF CREATION** that we examine include the monarch butterfly, the trilobite, the living cell, the human eye, the human brain, the human hand, blood clotting, the bird's flight feathers, bird migration, bird song, harmony and symbiosis, sexual reproduction, living technology, the dragonfly, the bee, and the bat. The section on **APE-MEN** deals with Cro-Magnon, Neanderthal, Java Man, Piltdown Man, Nebraska Man, Peking Man, Lucy, Ardi, Ida, among others. The section on **PREDICTIONS** considers 29 predictions made by Biblical creationism, such as the universe will behave according to established laws, the universe will be logical, and there will be a vast unbridgeable gulf between man and the animal kingdom. **DARWINIAN GODS** takes a look at inventions that evolutionists have devised to avoid divine Creation, such as panspermia and aliens, self-organization, and the multiverse. 608 pages.

SOWING AND REAPING: A COURSE IN EVANGELISM.

ISBN 978-1-58318-169-0. This course is unique in several ways. It is unique in its approach. While it is practical and down-to-earth, it does not present a formulaic approach to soul winning, recognizing that individuals have to be dealt with as individuals. The course does not include any sort of psychological manipulation techniques. It does not neglect repentance in soul winning, carefully explaining the biblical definition of repentance and the place of repentance in personal evangelism. It explains how to use the law of God to plow the soil of the human heart so that the gospel can find good ground. The course is unique in its objective. The objective of biblical soul winning is not to get people to “pray a sinner’s prayer”; the objective is to see people soundly converted to Christ. This course trains the soul winner to pursue genuine conversions as opposed to mere “decisions.” The course is also unique in its breadth. It covers a wide variety of situations, including how to deal with Hindus and with skeptics and how to use apologetics or evidences in evangelism. There is a memory course consisting of 111 select verses and links to a large number of resources that can be used in evangelism, many of them free. The course is suitable for teens and adults and for use in Sunday School, Youth Ministries, Preaching, and private study. **OUTLINE:** The Message of Evangelism, Repentance and Evangelism, God’s Law and Evangelism, The Reason for Evangelism, The Authority for Evangelism, The Power for Evangelism, The Attitude in Evangelism, The Technique of Evangelism, Using Tracts in Evangelism, Dealing with Skeptics. 104 pages, 8x11, spiral bound.

THINGS HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD: A HANDBOOK OF BIBLICAL DIFFICULTIES. ISBN 1-58318-002-8. This volume deals with a variety of biblical difficulties. Find the answer to the seeming contradictions in the Bible. Meet the challenge of false teachers who misuse biblical passages to prove their doctrine. Find out the meaning of difficult passages that are oftentimes overlooked in the Bible commentaries. Be confirmed in your confidence in the inerrancy and perfection of the Scriptures and be able to refute the skeptics. Learn the meaning of difficult expressions such as “the unpardonable sin.” A major objective of

this volume is to protect God's people from the false teachers that abound in these last days. For example, we examine verses misused by Seventh-day Adventists, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and others to support their heresies. We deal with things such as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, cremation, head coverings, did Jesus die on Friday, God's repentance, healing in the atonement, losing one's salvation, sinless perfectionism, soul sleep, and the Trinity. Jerry Huffman, editor of *Calvary Contender*, testified: "You don't have to agree with everything to greatly benefit from this helpful book." In researching and writing this book, the author consulted roughly 500 volumes, old and new, that deal with biblical difficulties and the various other subjects addressed in *Things Hard to Be Understood*. This one volume, therefore, represents the essence of a sizable library. Sixth edition Feb. 2014, enlarged and completely revised, 441 pages.

AN UNSHAKEABLE FAITH: A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS COURSE. ISBN 978-1-58318-119-5. The course is built upon nearly 40 years of serious Bible study and 30 years of apologetics writing. Research was done in the author's personal 6,000-volume library plus in major museums and other locations in America, England, Europe, Australia, Asia, and the Middle East. The package consists of an apologetics course entitled AN UNSHAKEABLE FAITH (both print and eBook editions) plus an extensive series of Powerpoint/Keynote presentations. (Keynote is the Apple version of Powerpoint.) The 1,800 PowerPoint slides deal with archaeology, evolution/creation science, and the prophecies pertaining to Israel's history. The material in the 360-page course is extensive, and the teacher can decide whether to use all of it or to select only some portion of it for his particular class and situation. After each section there are review questions to help the students focus on the most important points. The course can be used for private study as well as for a classroom setting. Sections include The Bible's Nature, The Bible's Proof, The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Bible's Difficulties, Historical Evidence for Jesus, Evidence for Christ's Resurrection, Archaeological Treasures Confirming the Bible, A History of Evolution, Icons of Evolution, Icons of Creation, Noah's Ark and the Global Flood.

WAY OF LIFE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE & CHRISTIANITY. ISBN 1-58318-005-2. This hardcover Bible encyclopedia contains 640 pages (8.5x11) of information, over 6,000 entries, and over 7,000 cross-references. Twenty-five years of research went into this one-of-a-kind reference tool. It is a complete dictionary of biblical terminology and features many other areas of research not often covered in such volumes, including Bible Versions, Denominations, Cults, Christian Movements, Typology, the Church, Social issues and practical Christian living, Bible Prophecy, and Old English Terminology. It does not correct the Authorized Version of the Bible, nor does it undermine the fundamental Baptist's doctrines and practices as many study tools do. The 5th edition (October 2008) contains new entries, extensive additions to existing entries, and a complete rewriting of the major articles. Many preachers have told us that apart from Strong's Concordance, the Way of Life Bible Encyclopedia is their favorite study tool. A missionary told us that if he could save only one study book out of his library, it would be our Bible encyclopedia. An evangelist in South Dakota wrote: "If I were going to the mission field and could carry only three books, they would be the Strong's concordance, a hymnal, and the Way of Life Bible Encyclopedia." Missionary author Jack Moorman says: "The encyclopedia is excellent. The entries show a 'distilled spirituality.'" 5th edition, 640 pages. A computer edition of the encyclopedia is available as a standalone eBook for PDF, Kindle, and ePub. It is also available as a module for Swordseacher.

Way of Life Literature
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