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THE REVIEW

It Is All About the Word

by Pastor Charles Dear, Moderator *IBFNA*

This past January the American Bible Society conducted a survey, in conjunction with the Barna Group, to evaluate the regard for and use of the Bible in American society. The results from the survey reveal significant changes, indicating that the people in our churches and communities are not the same spiritually as they were years ago. This is certainly no surprise to us, but it should sound a warning for all our ministries and raise concerns for our people.

77 percent of those surveyed agreed that morals and values are declining in America. Interestingly, a majority of these acknowledged that the decline was related to a lack of Bible-reading. In addition, the survey revealed a deeply polarized division between older and younger people over the role of the Bible in American society.

A second significant pattern that emerged was the gap between profession and practice. While 80 percent considered the Bible sacred, and 66 percent agreed with the statement that the Bible provides everything you need to know to live a meaningful life, there were also 58 percent who would not seek wisdom or advice from the Bible, and another 57 percent confessed that they read the Bible less than five times a year. In fact, for people ages 18-28, 57 percent read the Bible less than three times a year, and some answered *never*.

A third figure revealed in the survey was perhaps more startling. America includes six million new antagonists to the Bible since the beginning of 2012.

I doubt that any of us are surprised by the changing spiritual climate of our nation, but it is still disturbing to see the size of the declension, as well as the fact that it is our young people who are losing the most ground spiritually. Much of this decline comes from the leadership of our nation, beginning with the office of the President. Over the years of this administration beginning with 2008, many incidents, events, appointments, and actions related to the presidency have been antagonistic to Christianity. David Barton, in his 2012 report, "America's Most Biblically Hostile U.S. President," cites over 50 specifically documented actions that targeted basic Bible principles. Simultaneously, steps in support of the advancement of Islam in America found presidential support.

This hostility to biblical Christianity extends throughout governmental agencies, beginning with the Justice Department's refusal to enforce the Defense of Marriage Act in spite of its lawful passage. Contrast this refusal with official support of legitimizing homosexual unions as marriage through significant expenditures of public monies and the campaigning of politicians across the country. Be assured that as state legislators surrender to the intense lobbying efforts of homosexual rights groups, disregarding public sentiment, this issue will be brought next to the doorsteps of our churches very soon.

According to *Christianity Today*, January 11, 2012, this Administration argued in the Supreme Court that the First Amendment did not protect churches or synagogues in regard to the hiring of pastors and rabbis. While the Administration lost that case, they continue to push for distinguishing the preaching and teaching ministries of a church from other "non-religious" ministries of the church, such as child care, education, and food banks, so that equal-employment-opportunity policies can be imposed upon the "non-religious" programs. Just defending our churches in court from these bureaucratic, tax-supported attacks against our biblical beliefs could bring bankruptcy. This danger is known to our churches in Pennsylvania, where the recently proposed extension of the statute of limitations by the state legislature for abuse charges specifically targets non-profit organizations. Unlike Great Britain, in America ministries can be completely innocent but still go bankrupt proving it.



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The real point here is not so much to bemoan attacks upon the Church or the declining regard for the Bible within our society. Our question should really ask how the Church will respond to these efforts to silence the gospel of Jesus Christ. The potential answers are basically two. Churches will either concede to cultural corruption, adapting their teachings to accommodate homosexuality, abortion-on-demand, the deification of government on every level, and the redefinition of Christianity, or they will rediscover the courage to speak God's truth to the powers that be, as the apostles did so long ago. This raises another question, "Which churches will concede, and which churches will remain steadfast and immovable under such duress?"

Clearly, the mainline denominations folded decades ago, where now homosexuality and abortion are non-issues for both the church and its families. However, the interesting question at this point in church history will be answered: "Where will churches committed to a contemporary ethos stand on these issues?" When you have already made major concessions to the unbelieving world with fleshly worship, choreographed entertainment, inoffensive preaching, and step programs, how much further must one proceed beyond these erased lines between right and wrong to accept things like abortion, adultery, and homosexuality?

There is an inherent weakness in the mindset that strives to be contemporary, where necessary lines of limitation are first liberalized and then erased as a matter of habit. Drawing doctrinal lines and setting limiting standards have become anathema for many ministries devoted to being contemporary. The few lines that do still exist are faintly drawn and rarely promoted openly. Such lines would violate their cardinal rule against offending someone. While this toleration of evil may not be overtly obvious at first, pressures will continue to mount, even from within the congregation, where people will be asking "Why not accept these things?" under a spell of governmental propaganda, rampant worldliness, and political correctness. In this context there is no cultivation of personal or ecclesiastical holiness and no Spirit of revival.

Lest we should gloat as separatists, we must remember that we are not immune spectators to these developments in our society. We need to honestly accept some responsibility here. Reading the survey's statistics, it is evident that we are no longer making the kind of difference we did in the past. While our ministries may have maintained clear biblical standards, and while we

may have been faithfully preaching and teaching the Word, are we still effectively reaching the hearts of people?

Today people are overwhelmed by corruption and misleading information. Emotional appeals, which are both dishonest and contrary to the clear teachings of God's Word, amplify this misinformation. Spiritual discernment has diminished among God's people. Good and evil are now painted in shades of gray. Therefore, it is easier to understand the ABS report's assertion that people who know there is something important about God's Word are just not sure what it is. Increasing illiteracy compounds the discernment problem, a situation largely caused by poor education. While there may be a sincere desire to read God's Word, an increasing number of our people are finding the task a frustrating struggle, causing them to simply give up and to rely solely on the preaching and teaching heard at church. Governmental leaders have cultivated this dependency that now afflicts our churches. Increasingly, our time resembles the Dark Ages, when illiterate people were completely dependent upon priests and prelates to tell them what the Bible says. Let us imitate the Bereans of Acts 17, who learned to read and searched the scriptures.

There is a time factor here as well. Just how much time does our typical church member sit under the ministry of the Word in comparison to the amount of time he is exposed to the world's messages? The answer is clear—not enough to compensate for all the ungodly brainwashing our people face every day. In order to compete with all the relentless voices and worldly values impacting our people daily, we must cultivate in them Bible-reading and Bible-study beyond the preaching and teaching ministries of our churches. We already know that Sunday morning is not enough, but the truth is that while Sunday night and midweek services help, our people need more of the Word throughout the week to counteract the stream of anti-Christian media sprayed at them. Our people need to discover each day the relevance of scripture to everyday life. This is essential to the maintenance of their spiritual health. The Word of God is the answer for all our needs. Not only must it be the focus of all our ministries, but also it must be the authority directing the daily lives of our people. Unless it is, we too will abandon the one last source of truth we have today.

(Footnotes)

¹ See the April 2013 update at <http://www.wallbuilders.com/libissuesarticles.asp?id=106938>.

The Importance of Mentors in the Ministry

By: Pastor Justin Kauffman

The ministry is hard work! Until one is actually in the ministry, he has no idea just how difficult the work can be. Our Bible colleges and seminaries work hard to prepare young men the best that they can, but it is impossible for them to prepare men in every way. Now do not misunderstand me; I am not saying we should do

away with our colleges and seminaries. But thankfully, there seems to be a renewed interest in the importance of one-on-one mentorship. Seasoned pastors have a wonderful opportunity to help train young men for the ministry. The question remains, however, whether the young men are willing to be mentored by their pastor or

other godly servants around them. Too many young men are enamored with the “Christian superstars” writing books and pastoring large mega-churches. We need to get back to one-on-one mentoring as seen in the Bible. This article will present the model of mentorship, the responsibility of the mentor, the responsibility of the one mentored, and the reward of mentorship.

The Model of Mentorship

Our key verse is 2 Tim. 2:2, “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.” Timothy was Paul’s “beloved son” (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). It may be that Paul led Timothy to the Lord prior to becoming Timothy’s spiritual father. As a good son, Timothy learned from Paul. The *things heard* in our verse are the teachings of Paul, including foundational truths of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:13; 3:14). Timothy was to take those foundational truths and *commit* (παράτιθημι - *to deposit, to entrust to another*) them to other reliable, trustworthy men.

But Timothy was not to entrust these truths to just anyone. He had to be reliable and *able* to teach others. The Greek word for *able* is ἰκανός meaning *capable to teach, to have ability, or to be qualified*. These young men need to show ability to teach, and they must fit the qualifications of 1 Tim. 3:1-7 before becoming pastors who teach others also. This would require Timothy to investigate their calling, assess their ability, and invest time in mentoring them. Paul knows that his time on earth is short. He invested the time to mentor Timothy, who was also expected to invest time in mentoring other men. There are other examples of this kind of mentorship throughout scripture. We have Moses and Joshua, Eli and Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, and others. We need to get back to this kind of mentorship in order to prepare young men for the ministry.

The Responsibility of the Mentor

Teach - As already mentioned in our key verse, Timothy was to pass on what he had heard by teaching foundational biblical truths to other men. Though not in the context of pastors mentoring other men, several verses in the Book of Psalms express the idea of mentorship. First, consider Psalm 71:17-18, “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shown thy strength unto this generation and thy power to every one that is to come.” It was the psalmist’s desire to declare the works, greatness, and power of God to the next generation. Second, consider Psalm 145:4-6, “One generation shall praise thy works to another and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty and of thy wondrous works (Heb. *dabar; things or words*). And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.” In these two psalms, we have the desire of the psalmist to instruct the next generation in the things of God. Pastors need to do the same thing with qualified young men in their

congregations. They know the young men far better than college professors do, and they usually have more time to invest in them. Pastoral mentorship also has the advantage of preparing young men for the difficulties of everyday ministry.

Willingness - Notice the strong desire of Paul and his ministry team to give of themselves for the sake of the Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 2:8, “So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” The Greek word for *willing* (εὐδοκέω) has the idea *to choose, to do willingly, or to taking pleasure in*. We need pastors that see a serious need for and take great pleasure in investing themselves for the next generation of leaders. It is the biblical model.

Example - The old saying is true. Actions speak louder than words. The pastor should be an example of a man living for and obeying God. Again, Paul says to Titus in Tit. 2:7-8, “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.” Pastors need to live out God’s Word as they mentor young men. Hypocrisy in life can destroy the mentoring process and be a stumbling block to a young man’s spiritual growth. Nothing short of a vital, intimate relationship to Christ will allow a mentor to make a difference in a young man’s life. Consider Paul’s testimony and advice in 1 Cor. 11:1, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

The Responsibility of the One Mentored

Willing - It seems many young men desire to follow the “Christian superstars,” such as John Piper, Mark Dever, Al Mohler, and others. These men write many books and often have large ministries. The local pastor of a small church is often seen in a lesser light. Young men must be willing to learn from the pastor that God has placed before them, as long as that pastor is godly and doctrinally right. For any young man to mature, he must have a teachable spirit. Listen to Prov. 1:5, “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.” Also read and consider Proverbs 2.

Respect - The young mentee must respect his pastor and his teaching. Peter writes in 1 Pet. 5:5, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” A mentee should never think that he knows it all or that he knows more than his pastor. That is a great danger for some young men coming home from college or seminary.

Commitment - The young mentee must be committed to learning from his pastor and to serving Christ. Think of the relationship between Joshua and Moses. Remember the account of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments in Exod. 24:12f. We are told in v.13 that Moses and Joshua both went up the mountain. It seems that on the seventh day Moses is called further up

the mountain into the cloud of God's presence leaving Joshua alone (v.16). Joshua stayed there alone for 40 days. There are also other accounts of Joshua serving with Moses in difficult circumstances. Joshua was committed to learning and serving with Moses. Likewise, young men desiring the ministry must also be absolutely committed to the mentoring process. It would be tragic foolishness to disregard the experiences of seasoned pastors.

The Reward of Mentorship

The reward is simply a next generation of qualified, godly men to fill the pulpits of churches. There truly is a great need for godly pastors. Mentoring men for the ministry can also bring great satisfaction to the pastor investing his time and energy into a committed young man. It must have been a thrill for Paul to see Timothy and Titus faithfully serving the Lord. Again, our Bible colleges and seminaries can never cover all the ground necessary to a young man's training. Therefore, pastors living in the

"trenches" are truly needed to give insight into the everyday tasks and difficulties that young men will eventually encounter.

On a more personal note, I have greatly benefitted from godly mentors. I have been influenced especially by two godly men who have invested much time in me. I am very grateful to my first pastor and dear friend, Pastor Jerry Johnson, who has modeled selfless service throughout his own ministry. He helped me through some confusing times of my life, and the Lord also used him to give direction for my own pastoral journey. I am also grateful for my former professor, Dr. Robert Delnay, for all the ways he influenced my life. He was not only my teacher, but also a good friend. He first taught me Homiletics at an airport in Connecticut while we waited several hours for our plane-ride back to Florida. Much of his influence and teaching took place outside of the classroom. I truly praise God for the mentors that He has brought into my life.

Book Review:

Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

by David Platt. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2010. 230 pp.

By Pastor Greg Ward

From this book's title, I expected one that would point out all the wrongs of the American dream and how the pursuit of it directs our culture. Instead, I found a call to pursue service for Christ and leave the American dream on the shelf. From the book's endorsements, and because of its success as a *New York Times* bestseller, the reader might assume this is a book of positive evangelical encouragement. The author is far from simply encouraging. He states that his purpose is to show that the American church has actually turned away from Jesus. He challenges his Christian audience to commit to believe in what Jesus says and to commit to obey it. My review follows the author's development through the chapters. I will summarize his main argument and application first. Then I will investigate his arguments that need careful analysis.

After introduction of the book's theme, Platt makes a comparison of the hunger for the Word of God of Asian house-church leaders, who have no training and tools, to the hunger in most American churches. Certainly, one hunger is greater for extensive Bible teaching. The other is characterized by great complacency. He asks American believers whether "God's word is enough for us" (p. 26). Are we hungry for it?

As a radical among broad evangelicalism, he takes time to explain the gospel. He wants to make sure that his audience understands that you have to be lost in order to be saved. He emphasizes God's wrath against sin and the reality that humanity is hopeless in our sinful condition. We have a desperate need for Christ. Platt invites readers "to trust in the Christ of the gospel for the first time and for the first time to receive a new heart, a heart that is not only cleansed from sin but that now longs for him" (p. 41). When realization of that desperate need results in faith in Christ, the author's conclusion is that this should

result in believers with "a passion for God's word—his radical revelation of himself—and discover once again the reward that is found in simply knowing and experiencing him" (p. 41).

Platt quotes the originator of the term *American dream* to explain that it is about the potential of self-accomplishment. The author points out, "The dangerous assumption we unknowingly accept in the American dream is that our greatest asset is our own ability" (p. 46). Even more dangerous is the awarding of glory to self for that accomplishment. He points out that God works in opposite ways. We need to rely on God's power in ministry. Ministry accomplishment does not depend on man-made resources. It occurs through the power of God's Spirit.

He further critiques what he sees of American Christian culture that exalts a "grace centering on us" attitude (p. 69). After all, God loves *me*, so the thinking is that Christianity's object is *me*. The biblical contrast that he develops is that God pours his grace on us so that we might be a part of extending His glory. Platt does this by using five biblical examples from Genesis to Revelation and concludes, "It's a foundational truth: God creates, blesses, and saves each of us for a radically global purpose" (p. 71). He argues that *each* believer has an obligation "to every lost person this side of hell" and with that a personal global mission (p. 74). In applying the Great Commission, he emphasizes that every Christian has the responsibility to be a disciple-maker—that is, going beyond sharing the gospel to building relationships where Christian-living is demonstrated. He does not neglect the other elements of the New Testament Great Commission, which are baptizing, teaching, and being part of a community of believers. He emphasizes teaching by saying that every believer should be a teacher, and every believer

should be an active listener to preaching so that he can be an active teacher.

Platt goes on to challenge American believers to be sacrificial, radical givers in response to this global responsibility of each believer. Generosity is not limited to the giving of funds and possessions. Platt includes giving of oneself in ministry and service and “doing it all with the gospel” (p. 135). Again, he demonstrates man’s rejection of God and man’s condemnation before God from Romans. But in order for sinners to hear the gospel and be saved by faith in Christ—the only way they can be, believers must preach the gospel to them. As his chapter title indicates, “God has no other plan B” (p. 141). Believers are the means by which the news of salvation can get to the condemned. The challenging question is “will we obey God’s will?” (p. 160).

Platt draws out Franklin Roosevelt’s perspective that Americans will delay gratification and even sacrifice while enduring hardships with the expectation that future satisfaction will be better. It is the American hope in a better future. The author uses this to bridge into Jesus’ call “that following him involves risking safety, security, and satisfaction we have found in this world” (p. 161). The audience is challenged through biblical and biographical examples to take the gospel to places even when there is danger. The imperative given is to fix our attention on “a better country—a heavenly one” (Heb. 11:16).

Platt’s final challenge to his audience is a one-year test he calls “the Radical Experiment” (p. 183). It is the application portion of his message. It is a year of commitment to knowing and serving Christ in a dedicated way that is perhaps not possible to maintain over a longer time span. He recognizes that other things in life might be delayed and picked up again later during this challenge. The dare is five parts. First, pray in a systematic way for each mission field of the entire world. Second, read through the entire Word. Third, sacrifice your money for a specific purpose that is gospel-centered and church-focused. Fourth, spend your time in another context, i.e., give 2% of your time, one week, to evangelize and disciple outside your hometown. And fifth, commit your life to a multiplying community. These are certainly great and needed actions for believers. Platt asks if you are willing to live in radical obedience to Christ. The reader is prompted to make his answer concrete by filling in the commitment statement at the book’s end. I believe the author accomplishes his purpose to call Christians to commit to believe and obey Christ.

I have shared the positives of this challenging book. As Platt develops his agenda above, however, there are also less positive methods used to communicate his purpose and challenge. The “dry doctrine” above would not make a bestseller. These other methods are what gain the audience and popular momentum for the work. Throughout the book illustrations used seem not only to explain or picture the truth, but also to express another motivation. In consideration of this, we need to weigh the author’s style. Is it driven by emotions or truth? The reader must also ask how these characteristics color the final outcome and overall message of the book.

As Platt develops his agenda, he uses a number of illustrations that tug at the heart strings. His opening contrast is between the luxury of a large suburban American church and the primitiveness of an Asian house-church. The house-church leaders assemble with stories of suffering and call out in prayer to God. This is certainly a contrast anyone can see. But is one setting more righteous than the other? Is one group of people more spiritual than the other? The author’s conclusion is that the Americans are comfortable and have missed something about faith.

In the first chapter, examples of sacrifice to follow Jesus and the rich young ruler, who was told to “sell all you possess and give to poor” before he could follow Jesus, enjoy prominence in his biblical usage. His conclusion is that, in order to follow Jesus there must be radical abandonment. The alternative is to mold our own image of a “nice, middle-class, American Jesus” (p. 13). Not only is the author’s emphasis on abandonment to following Jesus, but many of the statements are along the lines of giving to the poor. If we do not do this, he says, we have actually turned away from Jesus. In the second chapter, the opening illustration is underground house-church leaders wanting to be taught the Word of God for hours on end. They gather in simplicity, if not destitution, and desire to be taught the Word. Their economic condition is part of the contrast presented.

Later, Platt seems to place four actions together as equally important to obedience: “Most Christians rarely share the gospel, and most Christians’ schedules are not heavily weighted to feeding the hungry, helping the sick, and strengthening the church in the neediest places in our country” (pp. 75-76). As I parse the sentence, physical needs seem to outweigh spiritual needs. This is emphasized with illustrations of a business man on a mission trip to Honduras, who sees people living in a city dump, and a retired man, who sleeps under a truck to cook meals for the hungry in the middle of rebel-fighting in Sri Lanka. In these foreign contexts, meeting physical needs enjoys greater emphasis than gospel declaration.

I believe the key link that generates the attraction and excitement for the book is the author’s statement that “if I have been commanded to make disciples of all nations, and if poverty is rampant in the world to which God has called me, then I cannot ignore these realities” (p. 108). His drumbeat for the visible demonstration of the gospel is caring for the urgently hungry. To help Americans better understand their own position, he asks from Luke 16 whether you look more like Lazarus or the rich man. Looks or appearance is the basis of his question, not faith in God’s Word.

Though several times Platt reminds his readers of the spiritual gospel for the lost, those reminders are in the shadows of lights shining brightly on meeting social needs. *Radical* does challenge believers to live for Christ. But I believe that the reason why so many have asked others “Have you read *Radical*?” is not the biblical argument Platt makes for gospel preaching. Instead, the excitement is responding to his statement, “if our lives do not reflect radical compassion for the poor, there is reason to wonder if Christ is really in us at all” (p. 111). This social-gospel emphasis distorts the simplicity of the verbal gospel of

saving grace (2 Cor. 11:3).

Radical will rightly challenge you. Just be sure that you are not swept up in the conclusion that the author's

way is the only way to obey Christ. His more recently published *Radical Together* (2010) continues in similar fashion, but it is set in a church context.

The Bible Doctrine of Separation, Part 1

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

“What are your separatist convictions, and how do they regulate your ministry?” Have you thought about that question? It has been my experience as the pastor of New Boston Baptist Church (NH) that many in ministry today have not. This condition of the church, of course, is part of the legacy of New Evangelicalism, which repudiated the Bible doctrine of separation generations ago. Harold Ockenga's news release of December 8, 1957 was very clear: “The New Evangelicalism has changed its strategy from one of separation to one of infiltration.” It is not surprising that many raised in the legacy of that movement have little understanding today of the Bible doctrine of separation.

This history notwithstanding, whether our generation of fundamentalists will continue to pass on to the generations that follow us a clear articulation of our separatist convictions and of the ways those convictions regulate our ministries remains an open question. Troubling anecdotal evidence at times indicates that the answer may be that we will not. Perhaps now more than ever, fundamentalists need to renew their appreciation for the theological importance, scriptural content, and principled application of the Bible doctrine of separation. This article will discuss the theological importance of the doctrine of separation.

The Theological Importance of the Doctrine of Separation

All Bible doctrines are equally authoritative because they are equally inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), but the Bible indicates that they are not all equal in terms of appropriate emphasis. The Bible emphasizes some doctrines more than others, and this emphasis is positively correlated with both the doctrine's perspicuity and its consequence. This greater emphasis, perspicuity, and consequence characterize a category of doctrines that the Lord Jesus called “the weightier matters of the Law,” doctrines like judgment, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). Doctrines like these are the great theological themes of scripture, and the size difference of the frequency, clarity, and consequence they possess in the written revelation when compared to doctrines of lesser weight parallels the size difference between a camel and a gnat (v. 24).

Therefore, understanding the theological importance of the Bible doctrine of separation requires correctly discerning whether this doctrine is a camel or a gnat, whether it has more to do with categories like judgment, mercy, and faith or with categories similar to the need to tithe spices under the theocracy of Israel. Two considerations indicate that the Bible doctrine of

separation is one of the great camels of God's revelation: (1) separation stands at the center of major theological themes: the holiness of God's nature, the sanctification miracle of God's work of salvation, and the pilgrimage of the believer in a hostile world; and (2) a common consequence of the neglect of separation is the denial of the faith because separation is a watershed doctrine between truth and error.

Our Holy God's Expectation for His People

Separation is part of the holy God of the Bible's expectation for His people. For this reason, only a holy sacrifice could atone for their sins. When describing the holiness of Christ, which qualified Him to be a blameless sacrifice for our sins, the author of Hebrews mentions separation as a critical component of this holiness: “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26). Had Christ not been separate from sinners in an important sense, He would have lacked the holiness that qualified Him to be a blameless sacrifice.

The Old Testament foreshadowed this requirement of God's holy nature in the separatist practices of its ceremonial law. This law required the Nazirite to separate from certain objects and practices (Num. 6:1-8), the Levites to remain distinct from the rest of Israel (Num. 8:14-19), Israelite families to eat clean food rather than unclean food (Lev. 20:22-26), the expulsion of lepers from the camp (Lev. 13:45-46), and many other separatist practices, which were designed to put a ceremonial difference between the clean and the unclean, in order to teach God's people that He is holy and that holiness requires separation from common things that can corrupt and spoil holiness.

The apostle Paul relies on similar Old Testament separatist themes in the era of the New Testament local church in order to argue for the importance of separation to perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). He treats them as contrasts of biblical theology, such as righteousness vs. lawlessness (Ps. 45:7, LXX), light vs. darkness (Gen. 1:4), Messiah vs. Belial (2 Sam. 23:1-6), and God's temple vs. idols (Jer. 7:8-11). New Testament believers must present their bodies as a living sacrifice and affirm as they do so that only a holy sacrifice is acceptable to God. This holiness requires nonconformity to this world (Rom. 12:1-2). We want to become nonconformist separatists, because we want to be holy, and we want to be holy, because our God is holy (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

Salvation Out of Darkness, Into His Light

Second, separation is part of what happens to the sinner who is called “out of darkness, into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). As the objects of God’s saving grace, believers are not only washed and justified, but also sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11). This union with Christ makes us part of the Bride of the Lamb (Rev. 21:1), and so the nature of our salvation through the atonement of Christ is analogous to marriage. Marriage is simultaneously the greatest act of union and the greatest commitment to separation known to man. What makes marriage a profound union is the commitment each spouse makes to separate from all others. Our English word *consecration* captures this idea especially well in the Old Testament ritual surrounding the firstborn of Israel (Exod. 13:2). This indicates that consecration is equally important for the relationship between today’s church of the firstborn ones and their God (Heb. 12:23).

The Believer’s Pilgrimage in This World

Third, separation defines the nature of a believer’s pilgrimage in this world. He finds himself a foreigner in a strange land having obtained citizenship in a kingdom that is not yet of this world (John 18:36, Rev. 11:15, Heb. 11:13, 1 Pet. 2:11). Although we still dwell in the world, we do so as wheat among tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43), as salt with a distinctive taste (Matt. 5:13), and as light that cannot be hidden or camouflaged (Matt. 5:16).

As the domain of Satan, that aspect of the world that stands in rebellion against its Creator is a hostile and dangerous place for the Christian (1 John 5:18-19; Eph. 2:2-3). It tempts him with its idolatry, and he must respond with self-sacrifice (Matt. 4:8-10, 16:24-26); it confuses him with its philosophy, and he must respond with faith in God’s truth (1 Cor. 3:18-21, Col. 2:8); it appeals to the enemies within, pride and lust, and he must love God rather than it (1 John 2:15-17).

The scriptures command the Christian to separate from the world with a variety of expressions. We must overcome the world (1 John 5:4), speak out against the world (John 7:7), keep clean from its stains (Jam. 1:27), escape it never to return (2 Pet. 2:20-22), die to it (Gal. 6:14), and never conform ourselves to its shapes (Rom. 12:2).

Separation is a Watershed Doctrine

A final consideration indicative of the theological importance of the Bible doctrine of separation concerns

its consequential nature as a watershed doctrine. The American Council of Christian Churches articulated this truth in a recent resolution entitled, “Resolution on the Doctrine of Separation and the Spectrum of Evangelicalism.” Here is part of what they said:

“A metaphor for the theological significance of a doctrine over the passing of time, a watershed doctrine is one that marks the line at which inevitable theological deterioration begins once it is crossed by a theological position. The importance of correctly marking the watershed for understanding what has happened to American evangelicalism was pointed out by Francis Schaeffer, a man not remembered today as a fundamentalist separatist, in his aptly titled volume, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. While Schaeffer lamented the surrender of Biblical inerrancy in that volume, he was closest to correctly discerning the true watershed issue when he wrote, ‘evangelicalism is not consistently evangelical *unless there is a line drawn* between those who take a full view of Scripture and those who do not’ (p. 51; emphasis original).

“It is the courageous and faithful application of the convictions of biblical ecclesiastical separation that draws this line. In Schaeffer’s example, failure to draw the line precedes failure to take a full view of Scripture, so it is the failure to draw the line that marks the true watershed point at which inevitable deterioration begins.

“The apostle John explains why this is true: ‘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 10-11). What John calls *bidding God speed*, Schaeffer called *failure to draw the line*. To fail to draw the line is to become a partaker in the evil theological position orthodoxy opposes. In the context of 2 John, it is to deny the doctrine of Christ by association rather than by message. Consequently, the inspired apostle charges both the false teacher and the bidder of Godspeed with participation in the evil deed, denial of the doctrine of Christ. As a result, John’s readers must now bid Godspeed to neither in order to be faithful to his command.”

Relegating the camel of separation to gnat-like status is a mistake of momentous consequence. Although some today see it as merely an outdated style of ministry, the Bible doctrine of separation carries the weight of weightier matters of the law, like God’s holiness, our sanctification, and our pilgrimage through a hostile world. To neglect this important doctrine is to be on the wrong side of an important theological watershed. Over time, the faith is surrendered where the Bible doctrine of separation is neglected.

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“FOUND FAITHFUL”

1 CORINTHIANS 4:2

MOREOVER, IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL.

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