

Discerning New Evangelicalism

Lesson Eight

New Testament Commandments of Separation

“Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with a convocation address which I gave in the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena. While reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ¹ ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the ² summons to social involvement received a hearty response from many Evangelicals. . . It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its ³ determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon ⁴ the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life” (as stated by Harold Ockenga in the foreword to Dr. Harold Lindsell’s book, *The Battle for the Bible*; subscript numbers added to denote four basic tenets).

“. . . in 1945, I was doing summer school work at Princeton Theological Seminary. The late Dr. John MacKay, then president of the seminary, returned from Amsterdam where he had helped to lay the foundation for the World Council of Churches. He gathered the faculty and students of the seminary on the campus. Dr. MacKay stood on the steps of Miller Hall and spoke on the ecumenical movement. He said that several great denominations were coming together, that the Roman Catholics would be observing, that the Greek Catholics would join, and that the Pentecostals would likely join. ‘But,’ he said, ‘we are going to need the evangelicals.’ He also said, ‘There must be a neo-evangelicalism.’ He then delineated what the characteristics of the so-called ‘neo-evangelicalism’ must be. Dr. Ockenga in that convocation speech at Fuller Theological Seminary three years later also delineated what this neo-evangelicalism must be. They were almost identical to the things Dr. MacKay had delineated and that other liberals were saying at that time” (Monroe Parker, *Frontline* magazine, Jul.-Aug. 1991, p. 25).

The question we must ask ourselves is a simple one. Is the refutation of the doctrine of Biblical separation a serious enough heresy to warrant complete rejection of those that proclaim it? If we understand the spiritual dynamic necessary to the “filling of the Spirit” and His divine enabling of the yielded believer, than we must say unequivocally, YES! The faithful believer has detailed Scriptural responsibilities in dealing with these false teachers.

“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 {appetites}; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18).

The Scriptural command is to “mark” those who teach false doctrine. It means to publicly and openly signify who these people are and what they are doing so that the unsuspecting (“simple”) will be warned against them. They are like a spiritual bear trap waiting to destroy people. Once they have been marked (pointed out), the command is to “avoid them.” This means to break off any fellowship, co-operation or connection with them.

“¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ¹⁶ But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. ¹⁷ And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; ¹⁸ Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. ¹⁹ Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. ²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. ²¹ If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work” (II Timothy 2:15-21).

II Timothy 2:15-21 has some very specific details regarding personal responsibility to truth and in dealing with those that deny truth or pervert it in any way.

II Timothy 2:15 - “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Accountability to God is the central emphasis of separation. The saint’s responsibility is to diligently study the Word of God in order to know the will of God in every matter and to exact God’s specifications for whatever ministry he might seek to do. The focus of the saint of God is to please God.

Often, the focus becomes centered on being careful not to offend men. Sometimes the saints give more loyalty to their friends than they do to their God. We must then ask them who really is their God?

“³² Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. ³³ But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. ³⁴ Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. ³⁶ And a man’s foes *shall be* they of his own household. ³⁷ He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:32-38).

To who or what we give the most worth is what we really worship. The saint’s desire should always be to seek God’s approval like a boy in a football game who constantly watches the sidelines for Dad’s approval. God’s approval comes when the saint passes the Scriptural specification by doing things God’s way.

“A workman that needeth not to be ashamed” is a saint who has done the work according to God’s specifications and does not need to be ashamed of the results before God because it was done in the way God expected. That “way” may not be acceptable by the world’s standards and philosophies, but the saint is not “called” to please the world or to seek its approval, but God’s.

“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (I Thessalonians 2:4).

When it comes to false doctrine, the saints must divorce themselves from any affection that might hinder them from absolute loyalty to God.

II Timothy 2:16 – “But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”

Men will frequently misrepresent the Scriptures in order to justify false practices. The saint must be ready and able to “try the spirits” (I John 4:1). The saint is to give a wide berth (“shun”) to anyone that proclaims a message against separation.

“Profane” means unhallowed or un-separated. “Vain” means empty of truth and without any Scriptural support. If there is no theological basis for what is being said, it is only “babbling.” There is no justification for any teaching that disallows or disregards the Bible’s teaching on separation. To seek God’s blessing and not be separated is an operation in futility. Therefore it is foolishness to listen to or read the teachings of false teachers who reject the doctrine of separation.

A perfect example of the outcomes of listening to this foolishness is what happened at the renowned First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. This church was pastored by Dr. W.A. Criswell for almost 50 years. The new pastor has taken the ministry of the church into the Purpose Driven Movement (PDM).

Under the leadership of the new pastor, the Criswell Building that housed real ministries is to be torn down to build a \$55,000,000 complex housing a 1,200 seat dinner theater, Starbucks Coffee house, McDonald's Fast Food Restaurant and a Crispy Crème Donut Shop to satisfy the carnal WANTS of *Seekers* and to make the church more *Seeker sensitive*. This is the Rick Warren's philosophy of ministry summarized as follows; *if people do not want what the church is about; make the church about what people want* (ICHABOD; no glory).

Dan Southerland started Church Transitions Inc., (www.churchtransitions.com) an organization that trains pastors and church leaders to effectively manage major transitions. Dan has trained over 100,000 pastors and church leaders in the past seven years. His focus is how to implement the purpose-driven paradigm in existing churches. He uses the following eight steps to transition a church into PDM.

“The process of transition that we teach is a simple one:

- **Step one** - Prepare for change
- **Step two** - Define your changes
- **Step three** - Plant your vision with your key leaders
- **Step four** - Share your vision with the whole church
- **Step five** - Implement your changes
- **Step six** - Deal with the opposition
- **Step seven** - Make adjustments
- **Step eight** - Evaluate the result”

Notice step six; “deal with opposition.” What this really means in my experience is purposefully drive opposition out of the church. Dealing with the opposition has taken to the extreme in many cases. Restraining orders have been issued barring opposing church members from attending church meetings. Police have been called to bodily escort opposing church members from church meetings.

The “opposition” is usually people with Biblical convictions and spiritual maturity. These people are viewed as the *resistance movement*. What is this transitioning in reality? It is stealing a church and its facilities away from God's purposes of Kingdom building, to be used for a man's purpose in personal empire building with a distorted and corrupt view of gathering *mixed multitudes*.

This form of New Evangelicalism is especially seductive. These people operate covertly (in the shadows) gathering a strong nucleus of people before they move to steal a church. This is what really takes place in the first three steps of transitioning a church to PDM. Then step four is implemented; “Share your vision with the whole church.” They know there will be opposition. Nonetheless, step five is implemented. The changes involve a complete transition in philosophy of ministry beginning with the abrogation of the practice of separation. Worldliness is invited into the church to attract Seekers.

Why is it foolishness to listen to or read the teachings of false teachers who reject the doctrine of separation? Because the product of a message that endorses a lack of separation and that is void of Scriptural support is that it will “increase unto more ungodliness.” The idea is that the message itself is ungodly and it will produce “ungodliness.” The verse refers to a resulting disrespect for God as a result of the misrepresentation of Who He is, and what He expects from His saints.

II Timothy 2:17 – (Gangrene in the Body of Christ) – “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;”

The teaching of the un-separated may be very appealing to the ears of the saints. However, it will not be appealing if one's ears are open to God's Word.

“³ 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; ⁴ And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Timothy 4:3-4).

The message of the *Ear Ticklers* will usually gather a large following. In doing so, they formulate a nucleus of people with this distorted view of *ministry*. We should always be careful not to confuse a *crowd* with a *church*. Any group of people that professes salvation but refuses to be separated is just a *crowd* (mixed multitude). A church is a group of people who have covenanted to live separated unto God and from the world for the purposes of being equipped (“perfected”) to do “ministry” (reach souls for Christ and disciple them).

To allow un-separated church members to remain as church members (with voting privileges) is extremely dangerous and is essentially spiritual suicide. The un-separated are like a “canker” (gangrene) in the Body of Christ. Their lifestyles inflame and begin to corrupt; eating away at everything they touch. The only correction for gangrene is to separate the infected area from the rest of the body (see I Cor. 5:1-13). In doing so, care needs to be taken in dividing the “simple” (babies who have been seduced, deceived and led astray) from the “wolves.”

Some have said we should attack the issues, but not name names. While here (II Tim. 2:17), Paul gives two examples and names them. In the next verse he will publicly detail their heresy.

II Timothy 2:18 – “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

These two men, “concerning the truth,” had made a grave error. The error is not the emphasis, but the fact that people were greatly misled. “Overthrow” is KATASROPHE in the Greek. The result of a misrepresentation of God’s word is always a catastrophe. When a false doctrine is propagated, it results in wrong actions on the part of those who believe it. One of the greatest catastrophes of this century is the rise and acceptance of New Evangelicalism of which the central teaching is the abolition and denial of the Bible’s teaching on personal and ecclesiastical separation.

II Timothy 2:19 – “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

The purity of a local church is indispensable to its security as a force for God. It is also indispensable to every local church’s continuation and the production of genuine “fruit” (see 1 Cor.6:19-20). The local church is constantly under God’s testing and scrutinization as to faithfulness and obedience to His Word. His command is that “everyone that nameth the Name of Christ depart {separate} from iniquity” {lawlessness, a lifestyle without Scriptural limitations and parameters, see Judges 21:25}.

II Timothy 2:20 – “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.”

A person unwilling to “depart from iniquity” will always end up as a “vessel of dishonor.” Although the un-separated are saved, they cannot be used of God for honorable service. This does not mean He will not use them, but that by reason of their lifestyle He must use them as negative examples of what happens to people who refuse to live for Him. In man’s eyes some of these people appear to be “gold” and “silver,” but in God’s eyes they are just vessels of “wood” and “earth” (see 1 Corinthians 3:12-17). They function in the flesh not in the Spirit. You can never “walk in the Spirit” (see Galatians 5:16 & 24) and be disobedient to the Word of God at the same time. It is by walking in the Spirit that the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit in us.

II Timothy 2:21 – “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

The saint's responsibility is to "purge" himself of any influence of the teaching of un-separated brethren; that is, avoid or "shun" their teachings as destructive to the local church and its holiness before God.

A local church is made up of individual saints. They must, individually, take a stand of opposition against these corrupters. Then they can individually be the kind of people that God can bless. They can be "sanctified, and meet {prepared or fit} for the Master's use." They will be "prepared {furnished, see also 3:17} unto every good work."

Our ministry to them is to seek to instruct them gently and patiently (v 24). You will never change a rebel's heart by demanding submission to authority, but by being an example of submission to authority in "meekness" (v 25). After all they "oppose" "themselves."

The separated saint's responsibility is to consistently live separate from any lifestyle that contradicts the Word of God and be a positive peer pressure in the world. Perhaps, by God's grace, the un-separated will see this exemplary lifestyle and hear our words of exhortation and repent (v 25).

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1. According to the statement made by Dr. Harold Ockenga in his forward to Dr. Harold Lindsell's book, *The Battle for the Bible*, what are the four basic tenets of New Evangelicalism? _____

2. Is the refutation of the doctrine of Biblical separation a serious enough heresy to warrant complete rejection of those that proclaim it? _____

3. Read Romans 16:17-18. Explain the meaning of the words "mark" and "avoid" as they relate to your personal responsibilities in dealing with false teachers such as New Evangelicals. _____

4. According to II Timothy 2:15, what is a central purpose for studying the Word of God? _____

5. Read Matthew 10:32-38. How do these verses help us get a balanced perspective of God's will regarding our loyalty to God's Truth and our loyalty to family and friends? _____

6. Read II Timothy 2:16. Discuss WHY a Christian should "shun profane *and* vain babblings." _____

7. Why should Ichabod be written across the following statement: "*If people do not want what the church is about; make the church about what people want*"? _____

8. List and define each of the eight (8) steps to transitioning a church PDM according to Don Sutherland of Church Transitions Inc. _____

9. Why is this form of New Evangelicalism (PDM) especially seductive and dangerous? _____

10. Read II Timothy 2:17. What is a "canker" in modern terminology and what is the only solution to that problem? _____

11. Read II Timothy 2:18. How do New Evangelicalism and PDM "overthrow the faith of some"? _____

12. Read II Timothy 2:19. How does the purity of a local church relate to its power with God? _____
