

# REDEEMING THE TIME

*"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).*

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INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES  
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## Faithful to Obey the Word of God

### “BE YE SEPARATE”

*Message delivered to the  
18th World Congress (Part 2)  
International Council of Christian Churches  
January 27, 2012 • Serra Negra, Brazil*

BY BRAD K. GSELL

**T**he subject which has been assigned to me is: “Faithful to Obey the Word of God,” as it applies to what is called Biblical Separation. The two texts accompanying this topic are 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 and Romans 16:17. Because the International Council of Christian Churches has attempted to obey such passages, the churches in the ICCC have sometimes been referred to collectively as being part of “the Separatist Movement.” This testimony has often been despised and misunderstood, despite numerous sermons and much writing on the subject. But, nonetheless, the Bible has commanded us: “Be ye separate.”

### The Bible Is a Book of Great Contrasts and Separations

It frequently is impressed on me when reading the Word of God that it is a book filled with great contrasts and separations. Furthermore, there is no attempt to amalgamate or even blur the lines between these contrasts. They are found repeatedly throughout Scripture.

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# The Obama Healthcare Mandate: *An Attack on Religious Liberty*

**W**ith government programs and regulations, there is ALWAYS a downside. This was shown to be true again at the beginning of 2012, when the Obama Administration mandated that abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization and contraception had to be included in ALL medical policies offered by employers. Although an exception was carved out for churches, no protection at all was provided for others — even schools, hospitals and so forth which are operated by churches, or are solely religious in nature.

The Administration went on the offensive. The White House declared that it was “absolutely firm” in its mandate. White House spokesman Jay Carney made sure there was no confusion: “Let’s be clear: The president is committed to ensuring that women have access to contraception without paying any extra costs, no matter where they work” (*Charlotte Observer*, 2/9/12).

However, within days, a firestorm of protest arose from within the Roman Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Church, and other

large religious organizations, declaring that their religious liberty and freedom of conscience were under attack.

President Obama declared, in an attempt to neutralize the opposition, that he would offer a “compromise” whereby the INSURANCE COMPANIES would be forced to offer these items FOR FREE to employees of religious organizations. Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice, quickly exposed this “compromise”: “The deceptive compromise requires insurance companies to provide employees of the religious organizations that object with contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs free of charge. That’s nothing more than a ruse, a shell game, an accounting trick. To cover costs, insurance companies would boost premiums, forcing religious groups — and the religious employees — to pay more for services that they find morally offensive. The compromise changes nothing — it still places the federal government at the helm of the religious views of faith-based institutions” (*Charlotte Observer*, 2/24/12).

The result of an obvious lack of teaching in this country concerning the foundations of our American freedoms has been widely evidenced in this controversy. Many simply don’t have a foundation from which to understand why there is a problem. Let’s consider exactly what is so dangerous about “Obamacare” and this new mandate.

## **It Places the State as the Arbiter of Our Healthcare.**

This is not the first time that Government-directed healthcare has been proposed in the United States. In the 1940s, President Harry Truman espoused an all-encompassing national healthcare program. At that time, the American Medical Association (AMA) strongly opposed it. One AMA pamphlet on the subject pointed out that “socialized medicine” was considered a central component of the Communist state and had been espoused by Lenin. The AMA and other detractors eventually helped to defeat this attempt.

All of these schemes have placed the government in control of what healthcare we are given. This was clearly highlighted in the recent hearings in which Miss Sandra Fluke, a student at Georgetown University (a Roman Catholic institution), spoke on the supposed hardship she and other students endured by not being given free contraception in their healthcare plans. The government should not get into these matters at all. The next person may feel the need for free chiropractic care. The next one may feel free nutritional supplements might be nice. We all need food to live. Perhaps the government should pay our grocery bills.

Dr. Carl McIntire preached a sermon in the late 1940s in response to the Truman healthcare proposal. It would do well for Miss Fluke and her supporters to read this message.

McIntire declared: “When the appeal is made to take funds of the Government, collected from all the

people, and give 'free' medicine, men think that here is a chance to get something for nothing and they will not have to worry about their medical expenses any longer! You can go out and sin all you want to; you can indulge in all the fornications you desire; you can dissipate [squander your finances and health]; you can drink; you can abuse your body; and it will not cost you a penny! You can just go down to the clinic of the Government and they will give you medicine to neutralize it all. The heart of man is constantly shifting responsibility. The heart of man wants something for nothing, and when a deal is made which makes it seem that he is getting something without paying for it, he will grasp it unless — and it is an important exception — he fears God and loves freedom from the State's corrupt power..."

He continued: "This wickedness in man's heart involves the politician, and the doctors. They are men! When a state is made up of wicked men who put the responsibility of their medical care in the hands of the State, there is a concentration of power, a concentration of authority over the doctors and over the individual which is absolutely foreign to our republican form of government and the concept upon which our nation was built."

The State may require businesses and insurance companies to deal honestly, but our U.S. Constitution nowhere gives the State the prerogative to determine and provide our medical coverage. As one commentator recently stated, "People have become willing to substitute FREEDOM for FREE STUFF!"

### **It Places the State in the Position of Determining What Is Religious and What Is Not**

One very troubling aspect of this recent mandate (even with the supposed "compromise") is that Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius (an unelected bureau-

crat), took it upon herself, apparently with the Administration's consent, to determine what is religious and what is not. Churches were given an exemption, but religious hospitals, schools, publishing houses, mission boards, etc., were to be considered differently.

Although all of these named enterprises are considered part of their respective churches' ministries, Sebelius took them out from under the protections of the First Amendment! Even such liberals as Catholic Health Association President, Sister Carol Keehan, stated: "The impact of being told we do not fit the new definition of a religious employer and therefore cannot operate our ministries following our consciences has jolted us," reported the *Los Angeles Times*.

Syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer summed the situation up well. He wrote: "By some peculiar logic, it falls to the health and human services secretary to promulgate the definition of 'religious' — for the purposes, for example, of exempting religious institutions from certain regulatory dictates." He further stated that "according to the Gospel of Sebelius," based on "secularist assumption[s]," "religion is what happens on Sunday under some Gothic spire."

Krauthammer further explains why the Administration felt it was necessary to make this redefinition of what is religious and what is not: "Ah. But there would be no such Free Exercise [of the First Amendment] violation if the institutions so mandated are deemed, by regulatory fiat, *not* religious.... You want to do religion? Get thee to a nunnery. You want shelter from the power of the state? Get out of your soup kitchen and back to your pews" (*Charlotte Observer*, 2/11/12).

It has even been stated widely that high percentages of Catholic and evangelical women use contraception. Therefore, so the reasoning has gone, the teachings of their churches

should not be protected against being forced to offer these pharmaceuticals. However, again, sadly, it appears that many have never learned that the whole reason for the Bill of Rights to our Constitution was to protect even the tiniest of minorities. It is the weakest and most vulnerable who need the protections the most!

### **It Ignores and Violates the Right of Conscience of Individuals and the Companies They Own**

There has been such a focus on religious schools, hospitals, etc., that it has all but been ignored that our First Amendment rights are INDIVIDUAL rights. They are not JUST granted to churches or certain organizations. In reading the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution), EVERY amendment makes reference to individuals ("the people," "the owner," "person," "he," "him," "the accused," and so forth).

This then brings forth another very great attack on liberty. Why should individuals who own insur-



**The Hon. Kathleen Sebelius, Chairman of the Department of Health and Human Services, struck a blow to religious liberty when she arbitrarily decided that religious schools, hospitals, etc., do not fall under the protection of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.**

ance companies, be required to offer something which violates their conscience? Why should the local barber or restaurant owner be required to pay to include something in his healthcare policy for his employ-

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## THE OBAMA HEALTHCARE MANDATE

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ees, to which he holds moral and religious objection? The answer, according to our Constitution, is that he should not be!

Our freedoms did not come from the state, and the state has no right to tamper with them and take them away. Our Declaration of Independence states clearly that “We are endowed by OUR CREATOR with certain inalienable rights.”

Thankfully, some in Congress still understand these principles. Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO), introduced an amendment “to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to protect rights of conscience with regard to requirements for coverage of specific items and services.” This proposed amendment sought to protect all citizens and businesses from this new mandate. Sadly, it was defeated by those in our Senate who have sworn to “uphold and defend the Constitution,” yet apparently either don’t understand it or don’t care what it states.

### A Return to Founding Principles

Many have tried to make this controversy about contraception, the Roman Catholic Church, or even Rush Limbaugh’s injudicious words. These ARE NOT AT ALL the issue at stake!

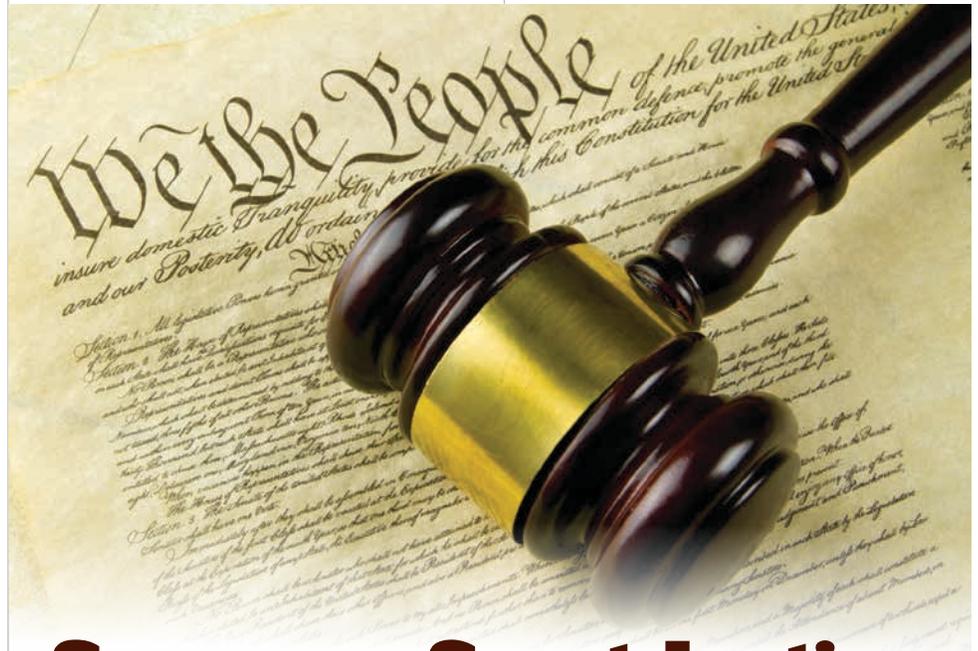
Although liberals and “progressives” will vehemently deny it, our country was founded as a Constitutional Republic, based largely on Christian principles. Although there were many religious groups, less than 2% were non-Protestants. This country, endowed with the blessings of liberty which come only from God, became a lighthouse to the entire world.

Let’s stand strong for these principles. James Madison, the “Father of the Constitution,” spoke before the Virginia General Assembly on June 12, 1788, discussing the proposed Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution. He

declared forthrightly: “There is not a shadow of right on the general government to intermeddle with religion. Its least interference with it would be a most flagrant usurpation.”

Senator Blunt opened his now-defeated amendment with the words

of Thomas Jefferson: “No provision in our Constitution ought to be dearer to man than that which protects the rights of conscience against the enterprises of the civil authority.” Sadly, the people’s representatives chose to ignore this. •



## Supreme Court Justice: “I Would Not Look to U.S. Constitution”

**L**iberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has often come down on the wrong side in voting on important Supreme Court decisions. Reasonable and intelligent citizens are often left wondering — even after reading her opinions — as to how she could possibly say that she had based such decisions on the Constitution.

Perhaps no one should have been surprised when Ginsburg stated in a television interview during a recent visit to Egypt: “I would not look to the U.S. Constitution if I were drafting a constitution in the year 2012.” She instead pointed to the constitutions of South Africa, Europe and Canada.

Anyone accepting the position of U.S. Supreme Court justice should LOVE our Constitution, and firmly believe it to be the very best, enduring charter of freedom in the history

of human government. Is it wrong to wonder whether Mrs. Ginsburg had reservations when she gave her solemn oath to “faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon me ... under the Constitution and laws of the United States. So help me God”? Is it wrong to question if this might have something to do with why a number of her decisions have had very little basis in the text of our Constitution?

Is this not just a reflection of her open admission that she considers laws of other countries in making her judicial decisions? On April 1, 2005, speaking before the American Society of International Law, Ginsburg asked what would be wrong with a U.S. justice basing part of his or her decision on “an opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada, the Constitutional Court of South Africa, the

German Constitutional Court, or the European Court of Human Rights?”

When our Founders gave us our U.S. Constitution, they gave us a Constitutional Republic, with limited government. There were specific checks and balances to keep the three branches of government within the bounds of their enumerated powers. As Daniel Webster stated on the floor of the U.S. Senate on January 26, 1830, the U.S. government was “the people’s government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people. The people of the United States have declared that this Constitution shall be the supreme law.” This was the PEOPLE’S Constitution, and no government official has the right to ignore or twist it to his or her own ends.

Liberals however, unable to get their agendas passed by the duly elected representatives of the people, developed an illegitimate view that the Constitution is a “living, breathing document,” which changes as society changes. This school of thought is really quite dangerous and is something our Founders greatly opposed and warned against. This construction allows justices to swear to uphold the Constitution, but then rule according to their personal beliefs and opinions. They can always justify their contrived rulings by saying that society has changed, and the Constitution does not need to be taken literally — as it “lives and breathes,” it changes.

This has allowed such rulings as *Roe v. Wade*, which created a right to privacy which is found nowhere in the Constitution. This has allowed courts to use the First Amendment to curtail all kinds of religious freedoms, rather than to PROTECT them, as our Founders clearly intended.

The late Chief Justice William Rhenquist warned against this view. He wrote that the idea of a “living Constitution, in the last analysis, is a formula for an end run around

popular government. To the extent that it makes possible an individual’s persuading one or more appointed federal judges to impose on other individuals a rule of conduct that the popularly elected branches of government would not have enacted and the voters have not and would not have embodied in the Constitution, the brief writer’s version of the living Constitution is genuinely corrosive of the fundamental values of our democratic society” (*Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*. Vol. 29, No. 2, Spring 2006, 415).

Justice Clarence Thomas wrote: “Let me put it this way; there are really only two ways to interpret the Constitution — try to discern as best we can what the framers intended or make it up. No matter how ingenious, imaginative or artfully put, unless interpretive methodologies are tied to the original intent of the framers, they have no more basis in the Constitution than the latest football scores (*The Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 2008).

The Constitution does have a mechanism for change, should it become necessary. It is the amendment



**Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg: “I Would Not Look to the U.S. Constitution....”**

process. Although difficult to do — by design — there is a procedure, should it be necessary. Throughout our history, 27 amendments have been added to our Constitution. This is a process involving the people and their elected representatives. Let us all stand against judicial activism which is a not-so-subtle form of tyranny. •



**Missionaries, officers and board members of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions who attended the 18th World Congress (Part 2) of the International Council of Christian Churches in Serra Negra, Brazil, in January 2012.**

## FAITHFUL TO OBEY ...

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The book of Psalms is filled with them. In Psalm 34:15-16, David says: “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.” But, in contrast, he says: “The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”

Isaiah 40:8 contrasts that which is temporary with that which is eternal: “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” Life is temporary, but God’s Word abides forever.

Matthew 7:13-14 has a triple contrast between the wide and the narrow, the many and the few, and destruction and life: “Enter ye in at the STRAIT gate: for WIDE is the gate, and BROAD is the way, that leadeth to DESTRUCTION, and MANY there be which go in thereat: Because STRAIT is the gate, and NARROW is the way, which leadeth unto LIFE, and FEW there be that find it.”

John tells us: “He that BELIEVETH on him [Christ] IS NOT CONDEMNED: but he that BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED already ...” (John 3:18). Here is a double contrast between those who believe and those who do not believe; and those who are not condemned and those who are condemned. The next verses contrast “light” with “darkness.”

Jesus Himself often used stark contrasts in His teaching. In John 8:12, Jesus says: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in DARKNESS, but shall have the LIGHT of life.” In John 5:24, He says that those who believe on Him are “passed from DEATH unto LIFE.”

Then there are the contrasts between the new and the old. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: OLD things are passed away; behold, all things are become NEW.”

Ephesians 4:22-24: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the OLD man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the NEW man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

1 John 4:6 speaks of “the spirit of TRUTH, and the spirit of ERROR.”

So we see all throughout the Scriptures that there are these great divides, these great contrasts — these great separations, if you will.

### Personal Separation

In dealing with this subject in light of the church, I believe we need to begin with each of us as individuals. No church is any stronger than the godliness of its members. And surely, the doctrine of separation

**The Bible says that we are in a warfare against sin and the power of Satan. And no child of God can be faithful in obeying the Word of God unless he practices, under the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, what is commonly called personal separation.**

must begin with the life of the individual child of God.

The Bible says that we are in a warfare against sin and the power of Satan. And no child of God can be faithful in obeying the Word of God unless he practices, under the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, what is commonly called personal separation.

Paul entreats us in Romans 12:1,2: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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.” The child of God is to separate himself FROM the carnal worldly desires around him, and be separated TO the will of God as found in His Word.

In Galatians 5, we see another example of these great Biblical contrasts, of which we have been speaking — with a great separation between the two sides. Paul tells us, beginning in verse 19: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” And here, Paul speaks of ungodly actions, as well as departure from the truth.

But Paul does not stop there. On the other side, he says: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” So he tells us here in verse 24, that we are to separate from evil practices and beliefs — we are to CRUCIFY THEM — in OUR OWN LIVES and walk in the Spirit, with the manifest fruits which are enumerated here.

There MUST be a separation. Matthew 6:24 says: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” You will either be on the side of Christ and obedience to His Word, or you will be on the side of the devil and the lusts of the flesh. Again, more of these wonderful Biblical contrasts.

When each of us considers these matters in our own hearts, there can be NO room for smugness or pride. We MUST be struck with the same thing that the Apostle Paul struggled with. He writes in Romans 7:18: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not....” Then, in the next verse, he writes: “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

But, Paul seems to take heart as chapter 8 opens. He writes: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

Paul sees that seeking to live in obedience to God is a hopeless pursuit if we are to do it by our own strength and willpower. However, later in chapter 8, verses 13 and 14, he reveals the only means to obedient Christian living: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye THROUGH THE SPIRIT do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

It is WHOLLY the Spirit of God that brings about our justification (which is an ACT of God’s free grace); and our sanctification (which the Westminster Shorter Catechism describes as the “WORK of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man, after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness”).

One of the main reasons I think so many churches are weak and lukewarm in our day is because men and women are living carnal lives, in disobedience to God’s Word. They want to have one foot in the things of God, and one foot in the things of the world. They want to be known as Christians, but they have set up per-

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manent residency in this old sinful world, and have nothing to do with being “strangers” and “pilgrims,” as God’s Word requires.

We can bemoan the carnality in the church; we can long for the days when living the Christian life, and living in obedience to God’s Word, seemed to be taken much more seriously. However, let each of us look to ourselves, and in humility before God, seek to be faithful in OUR lives, faithful in OUR actions, and faithful in OUR stand for the truth.

These are evil days, and men and women of God, who have the Word of God, and love the Saviour, must not allow their testimonies to be compromised by leaving even a little space for that which is worldly and carnal. In this day when entertainment and pleasure are portrayed as our total end in life, let us take the words of Paul to the Corinthians: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you [conduct yourselves] like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). We are in a battle. Let us be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” forgoing our personal desires to follow and serve Him.

### Separation From Unbelief

As individual believers, God has commanded that we worship Him and come together as bodies of believers in the areas in which we live. It is such a blessing to be here at the ICCC Congress, and to see Christians from all over this little globe.

It is always a blessing when I’ve had opportunity to travel to other lands to be able to worship together

with those of like precious faith; to be with those who love this same Word of God, this same Christ, and seek to honor and obey Him. The ICCC is a council of CHURCHES, and it is likewise a blessing to see the testimony of the many constituent bodies serving and worshipping God in their respective countries and traditions.

However, we all know that there are many churches which deny the very things taught to us in the Word of God. The ICCC came into being in 1948 in opposition to the World Council of Churches, which contained many churches and leaders who scoffed at the Virgin Birth of Christ, His vicarious atonement on the cross, His bodily resurrection, His Deity, and so forth.

If you look at the ICCC doctrinal statement, our founders, in carefully crafted and clear language set forth many of the cardinal doctrines of the Word of God. This was a Council which contained churches which believed the Word of God and was ready to uphold the truth.

Our forefathers didn’t go to Amsterdam in 1948 and say, “We’ll just be the conservative wing of the World Council of Churches. We must maintain unity.” No, they saw the apostasy and departure from the faith, and were determined to stand against it.

The American Council of Christian Churches has all these years had as its theme verse, Jude 3: “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.” Verse 4 further explains: “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

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# 18th World Congress (Part 2) ♦ International Council of Chris



PALADIUM HOTEL



# Christian Churches ♦ Serra Negra, Brazil ♦ January 23-28, 2012



**FAITHFUL TO OBEY ...**

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Christ.” Here were men who were infecting the church with unbelief.

All through the Bible we are warned against false prophets and teachers. Jesus Christ Himself, in Matthew 7:15, says: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” They were teaching ERROR, as opposed to TRUTH — the contrast which we saw before in 1 John 4:6.

We think of the great missionary advances in the Book of Acts, where the Gospel message was taken far from Jerusalem. Yet, when Paul was with the Ephesian elders for the last time, he admonished them in Acts 20:28-32 to “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 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. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” Here Paul uses the same terminology that Christ used in Matthew. He called them “wolves.”

It is quite clear throughout all of Scripture that there is to be separation from those who teach false doctrine and behave in an ungodly manner. Ephesians 5:11 says: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” And, indeed, those who deny salvation through Christ alone and teach a false gospel are

<b>What fellowship hath</b>	righteousness	<b>with</b>	unrighteousness?
<b>What communion hath</b>	light	<b>with</b>	darkness?
<b>What concord hath</b>	Christ	<b>with</b>	Belial?
<b>What part hath</b>	he that believeth	<b>with</b>	an infidel?
<b>What agreement hath</b>	the temple of God	<b>with</b>	idols?

“unfruitful works of darkness.” The Bible has no equivocation on this matter.

I would imagine that if I were to ask you for perhaps the key passage dealing with Biblical separation, most of you would mention one of my assigned texts: 2 Corinthians 6. In this chapter, Paul again brings out more of these great Biblical contrasts in stark relief, which touch on both ecclesiastical and personal separation. Verse 14 begins with a very clear command: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” And then a series of contrasts are given to bring the matter into plain focus (see box at top of this page).

Then he states God’s command that we are to “Come out from among them and be ye separate.” Nothing could be clearer!

In 2 John 5, John tells the “elect lady” that he was giving her a commandment, which was not new, but went back to the very beginning. What was it? “That we love one another.” Yet, just a few verses later, he warns her that there are false teachers and those who abide not in the doctrine of Christ. He then tells her: “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.”

Unfortunately, many Bible believing Christians refuse to obey these commands. Dr. J. Gresham Machen, who separated from the Presbyterian Church in the USA, over the apostasy and unbelief which overtook that denomination in the 1930s, stated that the biggest problem was those who he termed “Indifferentists.” They

said that they believed the Bible, yet they would not do anything about the unbelievers in their midst. They were “indifferent” to the alarming danger of apostasy, which surrounded them. As the years went by, those who said they were tired of fighting, wanted just to get along, and refused to confront the unbelief, found themselves compromised, and little by little they began to accept and make more and more excuses for the heresy which used to trouble them.

Dr. Machen stated: “... the worst sin today is to say that you agree with the Christian faith and believe in the Bible, but then make common cause with those who deny the basic facts of Christianity. Never was it more obviously true that he that is not with Christ is against Him.”

Even some who have separated from apostasy refuse to take a clear stand, and are willing to join with others who remain in the apostasy; are willing to tone down their teaching so as not to cause dissention; are willing to preach what they call a “positive gospel,” so as not to be “too negative.” Yet, if we look at the example of the writers of Scripture, they preached a BIBLICAL GOSPEL, which included both positive and negative aspects.

Many today, by their actions, prove that they would not be happy with the ministry of the Prophet Isaiah, when he stated: “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1).

The founders of the ICCC not only stood against unbelief in the church, but they also separated from

those who, like those just described by Dr. Machen, say they believe the Bible, yet make common cause with the enemies of Christ.

The mid-20th century saw the rise of what was referred to as the New Evangelicalism. These church leaders wanted to gain the respectability of the world and the liberals in the Church by showing that they were scholarly and more reasonable than the hated Fundamentalists. They simply ignored the Biblical commands to SEPARATE from unbelief, and instead had the philosophy, born of human reason, that they would INFILTRATE the dead, apostate churches.

As the years have progressed into the 21st century, to the year 2012, I suppose the New Evangelicalism is no longer “new,” yet the damage of that philosophy abides with us still. In June 2011 we saw the much publicized meeting of the World Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Fellowship. The World Evangelical Fellowship is an international body comprised of those who hold to the New Evangelical philosophy. It is very sad to see that this group includes churches which claim to believe in the Word of God, yet they make common cause with the enemies of Christ. We believe that such fellowship with infidels is simple disobedience to the Word of God.

We grieve that such supposedly “conservative” denominations as the Presbyterian Church in America and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and evangelical churches in many of your countries, are involved in this. Such things have created much confusion and disagreement between those who claim to be Bible-believing Christians.

Some say we must separate from those Christians who are disobedient to this command to separate. Others say that such is the spirit of schism; and these often derisively refer to second-, third- and fourth-degree

separation. As with all such questions, we must be directed by the teaching of the Word of God.

### Separation From Believers

The idea of separation from fellow believers is NOT something we should ever desire. Jesus Christ told His disciples very clearly: “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Many of the fruit of the Spirit, which Paul lists in Galatians 5:22 and 23, and we discussed earlier, have to do with our dealings with our fellow believers, as well as our relationship with God: LOVE your brethren; be at PEACE with your brethren; REJOICE with your brethren; be LONGSUFFERING with your brethren; be GENTLE with your brethren; be GOOD in dealing with your brethren; be FAITHFUL to your brethren; be MEEK in your relationship with your brethren; be TEMPERATE with your brethren. If we are faithful in doing all of these things, we will desire the VERY BEST for our brethren. We rejoice when we see our brethren growing in the Lord and receiving His blessing. We grieve when we see a brother fall or suffer trials and persecutions.

Unfortunately, most of us have known those who seem to relish finding fault with their brethren, who seemingly like to puff themselves up by pointing to the failings of others. This is not what the Bible teaches that we are to do.

There are also those with a party spirit. If you are not with MY group, or MY church, then you are not an obedient Christian. This also is a sin. Paul spoke of this party spirit to the carnal Corinthian church in verses 10-13 of the first chapter of his First Epistle to that church: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the

same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

Paul does not drop the subject there. In chapter 3 of the same epistle, he states in verses 3-9: “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”

Later still, in chapter 12, Paul states that there is diversity in the Body of Christ. We are not all exactly the same and we were never intended to be. In verses 4-6, he states: “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”

He continues in verse 12: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”

The rest of the chapter elaborates on this, and states that one member

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cannot say of another: “I have no need of thee.” Verse 25 says: “That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.” And then verse 27: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” Paul repeats this theme in Ephesians 4 and many other places.

Even when we see brethren with weaknesses, our goal should be to build each other up and to restore. Paul closes his first epistle to the church at Thessalonica, verses 11-15: “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”

Back in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul also warns the Corinthians against carnality and sin. He catalogs a whole list of sins, and refers to Old

Testament accounts of actual cases where God judged individuals for these sins. He says: “Now all these things [these Old Testament accounts] happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” But then, Paul immediately warns against pride. We should never look at the sins we see in others and smugly think that we are above them. Paul says: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

The Presbyterians among us honor the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. Concerning the Ninth Commandment, the Larger Catechism has much to say concerning what constitutes a violation of the command to not bear false witness against our neighbors: “speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful or equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring; misconstructing intentions, words, and actions...” And on it goes.

“The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth be-

tween man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.” Do we do all these things when dealing with our fellow believers?

Even when, sadly, our brethren do things which need to be addressed, such passages as Matthew 18 detail how private problems with brethren are to be handled, with stronger and more public steps to be taken should not the sinful situation be resolved.

2 Timothy 4:2 shows us that there are a number of steps to be taken before separation from a fellow believer should be considered: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Here, we see that reproof, rebuke and exhortation are all in order in seeking to deal with those who are wandering from the path. And Paul is quick to exhort young Timothy that it is not to be a quick impatient thing, or one of personal differences. It is to be with ALL LONGSUFFERING and with DOCTRINE. There are many today who say they think we should emphasize Christian living, and de-emphasize doctrine. But,



Paul says that DOCTRINE is necessary and VITAL to proper Christian living and obedience to God.

It is interesting that many of these passages on disobedient brethren are found at the close of Paul's epistles. These are things which are heavy on his heart, and things which he wants them to remember. At the end of Galatians, chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, Paul says: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

As we read in one of our two assigned passages, Romans 16 (again the last chapter of one of his epistles) we see that the Apostle Paul very much has this love of the brethren in his heart and mind, which we have detailed in these last few minutes. He is not just the Great Apostle to the Gentiles who is writing generally to a church, with little connection to those in the church.

He sends deep, genuine, heartfelt greetings to a number of individuals, all whom he describes fondly with a real sense of gratitude for their service to Christ. He mentions Phoebe: "a succourer of many, and of myself also." Priscilla and Aquila: "my helpers in Christ Jesus." And on he goes, calling several his "beloved," and even refers to one as his "mother also," obviously feeling great affection and gratitude to her for her love and hospitality to him.

Following our key verse, verse 17, he sends greetings from a number of other specific believers to the members of the Church at Rome, including that of Tertius, his scribe — his amanuensis. There is obviously a deep bond between these brothers and sisters in Christ, separated by so many miles.

Yet in the middle of this passage, Paul has a warning for the Romans, and to all of us. He writes: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them

**I believe it is important to state that those who say that the Bible does not teach that there are times when "separation from brethren" is necessary are simply wrong factually. The words of Scripture are so abundantly clear, that this is not a matter of debate.... Here [2 Thessalonians 3:16] Paul uses the same root word for the believers in the church as he does for those who are walking disorderly. They are both BRETHREN. However, those obedient Christians in the church of Thessalonica are to WITHDRAW THEMSELVES from the BRETHREN who are walking disorderly.**

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. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

Paul does not specifically give names of these ones to avoid, but it is obvious that they were within the church and claimed to be believers, and that the Roman Christians knew of whom he spoke. To whom ever he referred, they were obviously very likable and very gifted at pub-

lic speaking. Yet, they were teaching false doctrine and thus causing divisions within the church. Despite the love and affection Paul obviously shared with the Roman Christians, he felt it necessary to warn them to be wise in discerning truth, but also in discerning error.

There are many today who accuse Bible-believing Christians of being too harsh. There are those who say that the Bible does not teach separation from believers. Yet, here the Apostle Paul tells the obedient believers of Rome to MARK those bringing in false doctrine. They are first of all to be discerning and be able to recognize that which departs from the truth. Once that is done, they are to AVOID them. They are not to give them credence and give them any credibility by continuing to fellowship with them. Many today accuse the faithful Bible believer of causing dissention and division, yet here Paul lays the blame for this at the feet of those departing from the truth.

I believe it is important to state that those who say that the Bible does not teach that there are times when "separation from brethren" is necessary are simply wrong factually. The words of Scripture are so abundantly clear, that this is not a matter of debate. In Matthew 18, to which we earlier referred, Jesus Christ Himself speaks concerning "If thy brother shall trespass against thee...." Here, Christ uses the Greek word *adelphos*, which means BROTHER.

After all of the steps are taken to correct this "trespass" by a "brother," Christ tells us that if he does not mend his ways after being instructed by the church, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Strong words, but indeed sufficient alone to show that Christ and His Word do teach a doctrine of "separation from brethren."

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In 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Paul gives a direct order to the church members there: “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.”

Here Paul uses the same root word for the believers in the church as he does for those who are walking disorderly. They are both BRETHREN. However, those obedient Christians in the church of Thessalonica are to WITHDRAW THEMSELVES from the BRETHREN who are walking disorderly. Again, the language is so clear as to show that Christ and His Word do teach a doctrine of “separation from brethren.”

1 Corinthians 5:11: “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” Again, the same Greek word for BROTHER is used, and the language is so clear as to show that Christ and His Word do teach a doctrine of “separation from brethren.”

Titus 3:10 says: “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.” This is obviously someone claiming to be a child of God. But, the believers were to admonish him twice to return to orthodox Biblical Christianity. If he should refuse, they were to then “reject” him.

But Paul was not afraid to openly admit to differences among dear brethren, and to name names when necessary. At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, we see that there was not total unity. We read: “And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said unto them, Men, brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the

Gentiles, by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.” They were able to work out their differences of thinking by sharing wise council between one another.

Also in Acts 15, we read of the wonderful, effective ministry of Paul and Barnabas. But at the end of the chapter we read: “And some days

**Many godly men in the past have upheld these doctrines of Scripture. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great Baptist pastor in London, declared on October 7, 1888: “That I might not stultify my testimony, I have cut myself clear of those who err from the faith, and even from those who associate with them.”**

after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.” Here were two brothers, with great love for each other, who had ministered together with great affection and effectiveness, yet they had a strong disagreement, and went their separate ways.

Even between Apostles there was not always uniformity and perfect

obedience. In Galatians 2:11, Paul writes: “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” Here was one Apostle telling the Galatian Christians of a fault in another Apostle!

I’m sure everyone in this room has had times when working in your denominations, and in your local congregations, when such disagreements have arisen. These are not situations requiring separation. It does however show that none of us is above needing correction, and we should humbly heed the counsel of godly friends when it is required. Also, it shows that some differences of a lesser nature, do not require separation, but nonetheless make it prudent to work separately. This in no way lessens the love we are to have one to another.

But, there are cases where Paul clearly denounces those who have departed from the truth, and refuse to heed godly counsel from God’s Word. In writing to Timothy, he warns him several times in both epistles against several claiming to be Bible teachers.

In 2 Timothy 2:15-18, he admonishes Timothy to diligently study God’s Word so he would know the truth and be able to teach it. He wrote: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Immediately after this, he gives examples of those who are not properly teaching God’s Word: “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

In 1 Timothy 1, Paul showed that he fully comprehended his own corruption apart from Christ. In verse 15, he writes: “This is a faith-

ful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

Then Paul commands Timothy to “war a good warfare, holding faith, and a good conscience.” He gives a warning, and names two individuals: “some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

2 Timothy 4:14-15: “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.”

Many godly men in the past have upheld these doctrines of Scripture. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great Baptist pastor in London, declared on October 7, 1888: “That I might not stultify my testimony, I have cut myself clear of those who err from the faith, and even from those who associate with them.”

I realize that there are many Bible scholars sitting before me today, who could give great insight into the subtleties of the original languages and a sophisticated application of the principles of hermeneutics. However, sometimes the simplest of illustrations can make a powerful point.

Dr. John Ashbrook, a long-time Fundamentalist leader in the United States, who went to be with the Lord last month, once wrote of his childhood: “I did a good bit of my growing up with my grandfather on a farm in western Pennsylvania. Not far away lived a boy who was more like Huckleberry Finn than anyone I ever knew.... Whenever work was done I sought out this friend as a companion. However, we could never be together for ten minutes before

Granddad would break us up with some work assignment for me. It dawned on me that this was not by chance. I asked why I couldn’t play with this friend. Granddad’s reply was, ‘You are not going to swear and you are not going to run around with boys who do.’ I wasn’t in favor of his answer that day, but he was right. If you hang with the swearing crowd you will swear. If you hang with the smoking crowd you will smoke. And, as a Christian, if you hang with the compromising crowd you will compromise.”

But even many who concede the obvious — that the Bible does teach that there are times when it is necessary to separate from brethren — they throw up all kinds of objections. I plan to cover just a few of these briefly. Dr. John Ashbrook, whom I just quoted, had a very good

**There has never been one of us who has been totally consistent in our testimony. However, that is not a reason to throw out that teaching of Scripture, and not to even try to be faithful. It must always be our prayer, with the Lord’s help, to be consistent in following His commands.**

discussion of several of these points in an article he wrote on “Separation from Brethren”:

1. How far are you going to separate? The argument is taken to the extreme: They say: “If you believe in second-, third-, fourth-, fifth-degree separation, soon there will be no one left but you.” This, of course, is an argument from HUMAN REASONING, not the Word of God.

Separation is a command of Scripture. Any not practicing it, are disobedient to Scripture. Therefore,

we are to separate from those who are disobedient to Scripture. Dr. Ashbrook wrote concerning this: “The person who has rent the fellowship of the body of Christ is not the Fundamentalist who insists on obeying Scripture, but the new evangelical who insists on fellowshiping out of bounds.”

Dr. Charles Woodbridge, who was the first General Secretary of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, wrote several books on this subject. One was titled: *The Deadly Menace of New Evangelicalism*. Unfortunately, today, many, even in Fundamental circles, no longer consider it a “deadly menace,” but rather something to be embraced. Both positions certainly cannot be correct or Biblical.

Dr. Woodbridge, in discussing the terminology of “degrees of separation,” stated: “The emphasis upon ‘first degree’ separation and the rejection of ‘second degree’ separation not only provides a cozy refuge for compromisers, it also furnishes would-be compromisers with a philosophical (but not Biblical) platform or basis for compromise. Perhaps they begin to feel that it is no longer necessary really to *hate* evil. One may “hate” it in its most obvious and virulent forms, but ignore it in its relatively “innocuous” forms! *This is not the teaching of the Word of God.*”

2. “It is impossible to be consistent”: Again, an argument from HUMAN REASONING. There has never been one of us who has been totally consistent in our testimony. However, that is not a reason to throw out that teaching of Scripture, and not to even try to be faithful. It must always be our prayer, with the Lord’s help, to be consistent in following His commands.

There are many things in Scripture which require the guidance of God’s Spirit and humility before the

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Lord to discern. For instance, all through the Scriptures, we see commands to shun worldly practices. Just because the Scriptures don't outline every detail of every worldly practice, doesn't mean there are no

**"The person who has rent the fellowship of the body of Christ is not the Fundamentalist who insists on obeying Scripture, but the new evangelical who insists on fellowshipping out of bounds."**

Rev. John Ashbrook

worldly practices that are deadly, and we are commanded to avoid. Likewise, just because we aren't given a manual from the Lord each year, listing every person and church from which we are to withdraw, doesn't mean that there aren't churches and people from whom the Lord expects us to withdraw.

Also, there may not be total uniformity in agreement on some of these matters. There is the problem of those who are indifferent or seem to be blind to certain compromises. But, there is also the problem of being too dogmatic on lesser matters which are not central to our Christian belief and practice. May we be very careful, humble and longsuffering in dealing with such matters.

3. "But that compromising group is doing so much good": Again, another argument from HUMAN REASONING, not the Scriptures. We certainly can recognize when a group is providing food and clothing for the hungry, digging wells, providing education, or what have you, but this is not a Biblical argument. 1 Samuel 15:22 says: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacri-

fices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Here were people doing something which outwardly was considered good, but God has a different standard! Obedience to His Word is what pleases God.

4. "Well, we'll all be in heaven together": That is very true. But, ONCE AGAIN, we have a flawed argument from HUMAN REASONING. When we get to heaven, we will all be glorified and see all things as God sees them. Our fellowship in heaven will be a great blessing. It is also true that any church or individual Christian which begins to practice separation on this earth will gladly be received once again with open arms by the Bible believer.

### Conclusion

We have seen that all through the Scriptures there is presented a great divide between God and Satan, Truth and Error, Good and Evil,

Light and Darkness, and Life and Death. We worship a God who "is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psalm 145:17). The Lord commands us to: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44 and 1 Peter 1:16). Anything which in any way departs from the holiness of God should be avoided. Psalm 37:27 tells us to: "Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore."

May those of us who are separatists, who seek to be obedient to God's Word, be known as the MOST loving Christians, the MOST peaceful Christians, the MOST longsuffering Christians, the MOST humble Christians—the MOST godly Christians (only through the work of God's Spirit in our lives). But, may we humbly and graciously seek to follow His commands, no matter what the consequences should be, so that our witness will be known by all to be uncompromisingly "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9). •



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