

The Clear And Present Dangers Of *Liberalism*

Introduction: Liberalism is good in some things; e.g. giving liberally is commendable (II Cor. 8:2), but, in most matters pertaining to God, being liberal is clearly dangerous and ultimately sinful.

Definitions: a. Not limited to or by established, traditional, orthodox, or authoritarian attitudes, views, or dogmas; free from bigotry. b. Favoring proposals for reform, open to new ideas for progress, and tolerant of the ideas and behavior of others; broad-minded. c. Of, relating to, or characteristic of liberalism. -- American Heritage Dictionary.

I) Preliminary Remarks

- * To go **beyond** what is written, to claim “we do not have to have authority for everything”, or “we do many things for which we do not have authority”, are all fraught with danger. Innovations, breaking new ground, stretching the boundaries, are all ok in authorized areas of expediency, but to ADD (not aid) is not walking by faith received from the Lord’s Word (II Cor. 5:7 w/ Rom. 10:17). This is liberalism to the point of error.
- * Often it is a zeal for numerical growth and the longing for religious relevance in society which drives liberal thinking. Religious results and the pride of life can be strong motivators. Also, the zeal for converts or spiritual development can push some to take control of other’s faith and /or resort to pressure and coercion beyond what the Spirit of God is accomplishing. But, the Scripture warns (Matthew 23:15).

II) Bible Admonitions... leading us to not take **liberty** (be liberal) in handling God’s word.

- * Cain’s deviation from God’s instructions about sacrificing (Genesis)
- * Nadab and Abihu substituting fire in offering incense (Lev. 10)
- * Joshua 1:7-8
- * Deuteronomy 5:32-33
- * Matthew 5:18 - not **one jot or tittle** shall pass away
- * Matthew 4:4 - **every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God
- * Jesus gives us the example of continually responding to temptation with “It is written”. We ought to likewise do as our Master and have book, chapter and verse for all we do and say (I Pet. 4:11).
- * II John 9 uses the word “transgresses” which means to progress, go onward, run on ahead...all of which is condemned.
- * In the early days of the church, the apostle Paul spoke strongly against the Christians tacking on circumcision, respect of holy days, etc. All of this

sort of thing resulted in an attitude that we are not complete with what we have in Christ...something Paul adamantly denies. Some might say it was ultra conservative thought that could not let go of the old way, but to the Gentile converts it was liberalism to add on these requirements which the Lord had not.

III) Resultant Dangers Of Liberal Thinking

1. Promotes emotions over reason - gets the "cart before the horse" - will resort to changes to bring about emotional good feelings; sometimes UNscriptural changes.
2. End justifies the means - The temptation is to bend the rules of "HOW" to get something done, if getting something done. A results driven mentality.
3. Treats certain issues as minor, if they are potentially divisive, so as to keep fellowship with some. Compromise is sought and a highlighting of certain major issues as all that really matters
4. Begin to regard those who are not always changing as less than acceptable, almost second class Christians. A spirit of elitism develops wherein those slow to change and adopt progressive ways are looked down on
5. Become habited to constant change - where does it stop?
6. Revised hermeneutic - a liberalized method of determining what God authorizes in His word. Usually dismissing the role of examples and inferences and not respecting it's silence.
7. Out of balance preaching; stressing popular & favorable themes

IV) A Few Examples of Liberalism In Denominationalism

- * Sprinkling for baptism
- * Lord's Supper on days other than Sunday & in frequencies other than weekly
- * Women leaders in churches
- * Taking up collections on days other than Sunday and in ways other than freewill contributions.

V) Liberalism In Churches Of Christ Today

- * Women giving testimonies, singing solos or in small choral groups
- * Singing with instruments and/or hand clapping
- * Lord's Supper turned into a meal to that satisfies hunger or made an extension of bigger social meal
- * Broader divorce teachings
- * Use of dramatic presentations, showing Andy Griffith reruns and the like, to enhance Bible study.
- * Elders of one church overseeing some of the funds of other churches
- * Churches paying for recreational functions, secular education, health care facilities, social work projects, etc.
- * Fellowship of denominations
- * Baby dedication services
- * Church celebration of holidays

Conclusion: We constantly need to be examining ourselves as to our walking in the truth and abiding in the faith once for all delivered to the saints (III John 3-4; II Cor. 13:5; Jude 3). If not, we need to seek the old paths (Jer. 6:16) and abide in that which we heard from the beginning (I John 2:24)