



IBFNA

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THE REVIEW

Desperately Seeking Godly Character

by Pastor Charles Dear, Moderator *IBFNA*

It often has been said that a man's true character is revealed by what he does when he is absolutely convinced that no one else sees or knows. In these last days, we have seen many contradictions between presumed good character and actual performance, where corrupt men protest that their personal lives have nothing to do with the performance of their public duties. Today's epidemic of leaders plagued with immorality and the indulgence of vile passions would be more than enough to cause our founding fathers to blush. That many of these men remain in positions of authority testifies against the corrupt character of the people who elect and follow them. Their complicity of silence is part of the problem, which precludes their functioning as part of the solution.

Consider Paul's conclusion in Romans 1:32: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." The *pleasure* Paul writes of describes a tacit approval of the flagrant sins of others, thereby justifying their own sinfulness. While many recognize such things in the realm of politics, fundamentalists should hesitate to cast the first stones, lest we become embarrassed by what has transpired in our own circles.

Let's begin with the scriptural demand for godly character in those engaged in ministry. For example, when we look at the requirements for pastors, we see in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 job descriptions that focus upon personal character no less than professional conduct. Consider the terms used in I Tim. 3:2, 3: "sober . . . patient . . . not a brawler," or Tit. 1:8: "sober . . . just, holy, temperate," which require an examination of a man's personality and character, not just his ability to preach and teach the Word of God.

I remember our first-time visit to a church in Eastern PA, where we heard the pastor remind his congregation how they all knew what a bad temper he had. Apparently, he had demonstrated his failure at self-control at a recent church event, but he was hardly apologetic for it. It surfaced again in that service as he commented about the special music that preceded his message. Sadly, the response from people in the pews was nothing more than a benign head-shaking smile of agreement that they knew all about his temper. Another pastor, closer to home, did express his regret for swearing at the players on the court at his Christian school's basketball game, but apparently it was not the first time he had done this at a public sporting event conducted by his church.



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We wish these were isolated instances, but over the years there have been many similar displays of poor judgment, poor character, and lack of self-control by those in ministry. The problem has been compounded by congregations cowed into silent toleration of a “bad boy” character in leadership, a phenomenon more commonly found in churches where congregational government is either weakened or abandoned for lay-elder rule.

The “bad boy” celebrity politician has been around for more than a generation, but it was crystallized in the media with the election of Bill Clinton in 1992. The weakness of this candidate’s character was neither ignored nor denied. To the contrary, it was flaunted and excused by the media to turn what should have been a liability into an asset by appealing to the sinful natures of the voting public, particularly women voters. What was sown then has produced a harvest of similar political candidates now for the 2014 elections, whose immorality has been portrayed as an asset, more appealing to a broader population of voters, especially those who resent our nation’s history of Christian morality and press their own agenda to overturn Christian influence in America.

While we who are in ministry are merely sinners saved by grace called into the Lord’s service, you will not find any latitude in the pastoral qualifications in the Bible for a “bad boy” character. Nevertheless, that character not only has been accepted by some ministries, but also it has been promoted to young men seeking to be in full-time ministry, by both leadership example and teaching, as a means of maintaining control over their churches. The abusive power of intimidation operates hand-in-hand with the “bad boy” persona. It violates the pastoral qualifications found in I Pet. 5:2, 3: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

We also have the words of our Lord in Matt. 20:27: “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” These statements hardly picture a

“bad boy,” rock star cult of personality.

Recent examples of these same weaknesses in leadership from missionaries, evangelists, agency executives, school presidents, and para-church ministry executives should draw similar scrutiny. Over the last 50 years, people who knew better at times looked the other way, “having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage” (Jude 16b). When we read about such alarming failures in the newspaper (think Penn State University), we should also remember that some leaders in our own circles swept things under the rug and quietly dismissed accusations in a manner contrary to scripture, supposedly “to protect the ministry.”

Twenty-five years ago, we had to learn the bitter lesson not to blindly trust those in positions of power and authority whom we admired. The consequences of blind trust have been expensive, both to our personal reputations and to our respective ministries, because we were summarily identified with those who abused their positions. In every case this failure has come as a result of artificially elevating certain men above biblical principles that must all apply equally to everyone in ministry. Aspirations to be the biggest, best-known, richest person/ministry have led both leaders and followers to pursue the cult of personality at the expense of proclaiming all the counsel of God. They pursue the hollow praise of men who have sold out the Truth so that they might hear the cry of the people in the streets, “Rabbi, Rabbi.” Like those who have drifted away into contemporary worship, these have taken the broader way of expediency, convinced that the end will someday justify the means.

Expediency has never succeeded. Nor can it, when it comes to the work of the Lord. It is doomed to failure because it is condemned in scripture. What it does accomplish is the glorification of the flesh as it grasps after the praise and glory that belongs to the Lord alone. “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).

Found Faithful: A Conference Report

The 23rd annual family conference of the IBFNA convened in Shipshewana, IN last June under the theme, “Found Faithful,” from 1 Cor. 4:2, “Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” We enjoyed together the edifying ministry of the Word from men within our Fellowship, as well as the encouraging musical ministry of Greg and Heather Murray of the Mike Pelletier Evangelistic Team.

Our National Representative, Richard Harris, got each day off to a good start with morning

devotions. Brother Dick covered a wide range of topics including the need to care for parents, the nature of a hand-washing religion that is powerless, and what it means to truly know the Lord from the book of Hosea. Each morning, devotions were followed by a time together before the throne of grace.

The daytime sessions were handled by Vic Perry, who spoke of the faithfulness of Joseph; Justin Kauffman, who challenged us with the need to spend time with God in order to be faithful; Ryan Owen, who warned that the trend to humanitarian efforts on

the mission field away from church planting is an act of unfaithfulness to our mission as the church; Jeff Bailey, who spoke of our need as good citizens to faithfully seek the peace of Babylon as the people of God did in the days of Daniel; and Dave Reinhardt, who focused on the exegesis of the 1 Cor. 4:2 passage, which happens to be his life verse. Useful workshops on church security, church and state issues, and the need to battle political correctness faithfully all helped to fill our days profitably together.

The evening sessions were great times of fellowship, song, and worship centered on the Word of God. Mike McCubbins spoke on understanding dispensationalism on Tuesday evening, distinguishing between the vertical, horizontal, and propositional

approaches to the doctrine. Kevin Hobbs was assigned the separation message this year, and he spoke of our Lord's passionate opposition to false religion from the Gospel of Matthew. Our Moderator, Chick Dear, sent us home with our hearts stirred over the courageously faithful and bold ministry of John the Baptist. Our day is in great need of men who are willing to follow his example.

The Fellowship decided to schedule its 24th annual family conference on June 17-19, 2014, at the Wyndham Hotel in Gettysburg, PA (www.wyndhamgettysburg.com). Mark your calendar, make plans to come and to bring a friend, and pray fervently that God would bless our efforts to preserve our vital witness for Christ faithfully for His glory.

Remembering a Godly Mentor: Ernest Pickering

by Pastor Jeff Bailey

As I approach my 25th anniversary as the Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Attleboro, Massachusetts, I find myself taking time to reflect on those who helped me get to this point. I think of my wife, my children, the flock here at Grace, and those men who took time with me when, as a young man, I was seeking God's direction as to the kind of pastor I would become. Over the years I have had the privilege of sitting under a diverse group of men.

Dave Reinhardt at The Baptist Church of Danbury, Connecticut showed me how to balance the demands of ministry with the responsibilities and joys of being a husband and father. Ron Ulmen, who celebrated his own 25th anniversary at Puyallup Community Baptist Church in Puyallup, Washington during my time there, demonstrated principles of leadership that I still draw on today. Both men exhibited the ideal pastor's heart, although they were very different in their approach to ministry. While my experiences with both of these men are rich in memories and lessons learned, it was a third man that God used to tie them all together for me.

In the summer of 1986, my wife of less than a year and I relocated from Connecticut to Washington, where I would begin my studies at Northwest Baptist Seminary in the fall. During the next year, I would sit under the influence of Dr. Ernest Pickering.

Dr. Pickering was well-known as an author, educator, pastor, and leader in fundamentalist circles, but I had the privilege of seeing a different side of him. Our first encounter actually took place in the fall of 1985 as an exchange of letters. The years 1983-1989 were marked by turmoil in the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. I grew up in the GARBC. It was all I had known in fundamentalism to that point, and the direction of the association was troubling to me. Dr. Pickering had

just become the President at Northwest, and I wrote to him to share my concerns. He took the time to respond and was gracious in his counsel. He advised me to focus on my training and preparation, and that time for me to take action would come soon enough. I followed that counsel and never regretted doing so. The time did come for action, and it was the year under him that helped prepare me to do so effectively.

Over my first year in Tacoma, Dr. Pickering would invite a small group of students to lunch with him from time to time. Usually, he would just listen as we shared our struggles with our studies, with our ministries, with finding time for our wives, and with our anxiety about our future prospects. He would rarely give advice, but rather he would make an occasional comment. It was not until later reflection that we would recognize the guidance that was given in those comments.

I spent two years at Northwest, but Dr. Pickering was only there for the first. He announced his resignation in chapel toward the end of the year. We all knew that the seminary board was displeased with the direction that Dr. Pickering was attempting to take the seminary. The student body was split in its views, and more than a few were pleased with his resignation. Those of us who had come to know and appreciate him, however, were seething with the seeming injustice of the school's treatment of him. It was during this time that we learned our greatest lesson. We were able to observe him as he negotiated the delicate balance between defending one's ministry without being defensive, being firm without being obstinate, being resolute without losing dignity. I have drawn on that lesson over and over again. I doubt that I would be celebrating 25 years at the same church without his example from those days.

My last encounter with Dr. Pickering took place toward the end of his life. His eyesight was already gone, and his hearing was failing. I was going through the normal challenges of ministry and struggling with discouragement when he took the time to call me. In the course of our conversation, as he faced the loss of all earthly things, he encouraged me with Jer. 12:5: “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend

with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trusteth, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” I will always remember the words he imparted. “Everything we experience today,” he said, “is preparation for tomorrow. God never wastes anything.” That kind of gentle wisdom, imparted with grace during his fiery trial, is more precious to me than gold. This student misses him still.

The Bible Doctrine of Separation, Part 2

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

In the first article of this series on the Bible doctrine of separation, I made the claim that, perhaps now more than ever before, fundamentalists need to renew their appreciation for the theological importance, scriptural content, and principled application of the Bible doctrine of separation. That article emphasized the theological importance of this doctrine, pointing out that separation stands at the heart of the nature of God’s holiness, the nature of our salvation and sanctification, and the nature of our pilgrimage through a sinful world as God’s people. It also showed from 2 John that obedient separatism is a watershed responsibility for the child of God. Find yourself on the wrong side of this issue, and devastating consequences follow down the road.

This second article on the topic will focus on the scriptural content of the doctrine. We will try to answer the important question, “What specifically does the Bible demand from a believer when it teaches the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation?” The answers to that question fall into two separate categories of responsibilities: (1) ecclesiastical separation from false teachers; and (2) ecclesiastical separation from disobedient brothers.

Ecclesiastical Separation from False Teachers

The last article mentioned Paul’s general emphasis on the need for separation when it comes to perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord according to 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1. He comes back to this theme in chapter 11, where he expresses grave concern over a specific danger he calls false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13). In Ephesus Paul described these religious leaders as grievous wolves (Acts 20:29), and in the Book of Philippians, he calls them dogs and the concision or mutilation (Phil. 3:2). An impassioned Paul commands that men like these among the Galatian churches be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9). Clearly, the Pauline doctrine of ecclesiastical separation from false teachers is not an academic concern calling for casual dialogue, but rather it is a militant distain for a satanic influence very destructive to the people of God (2 Cor. 11:14-15). We do not believe this doctrine well enough until we feel this Pauline passion for it. This passion must be a part of a pastor’s jealous love for the people of God (2 Cor. 11:2).

Much discussion has surfaced recently among fundamentalists regarding how it is that people of God recognize a false teacher when they see one. This is an important question, because Paul makes clear that false apostles disguise themselves as true apostles in much the same way that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13-15). It is the persistent goal of unorthodox heretics to wear the mantle of orthodox Christianity (v. 12). They are wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15). So how do we distinguish a false Christian leader from a true one?

Some have emphasized the gospel as the touchstone of orthodoxy. Kevin Bauder used this emphasis in a recent defense of fundamentalism, “The thing that is held in common by all Christians—the thing that constitutes the church as one church—is the gospel itself” [*Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 23]. None would deny the importance of the gospel to this question, but the gospel is only one-third of the concerns raised by the apostle Paul in Corinth: “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Cor. 11:4).

So where many fundamentalists today are focused on a single category of theology, soteriology, the apostle Paul was focused on at least three: Christology, revelation, and soteriology. Thirty-three percent is a great average in baseball, but it is a deficient score when it comes to adequately understanding the content of the Bible doctrine of separation. Paul’s categories were first those of his Lord, who had exposed the false teaching of the Pharisees and scribes of that day. Christ condemned them for rejecting the truth about Himself, hetero-Christology (Matt. 22:41-46); He condemned them for making God’s Word void with their traditions, hetero-revelation (Matt. 15:1-9); and He condemned them for teaching a gospel that sent people to hell, hetero-soteriology (Matt. 23:13-15).

To be fair, those who have made the gospel the center of attention often articulate the importance of the other two categories of theology to the gospel (see Dr. Bauder’s concern about biblical authority and

Roman Catholicism; *Four Views*, p. 31). Yet the indirectness of this approach has one practical consequence that seems to be especially problematic today (though others, like the importance of scriptural inerrancy, could be mentioned), namely, the lack of discernment it seems to promote among younger fundamentalists when it comes to separation from the Charismatic movement.

The apostle Paul treats “another spirit” in the Corinthian context as though it were a danger equal to “another Jesus” and “another gospel.” I am not sure that all who claim the heritage of fundamentalism do the same today. Some who promote miraculous sign gifts are popular leaders in what are labeled “gospel” causes, organizations, and movements that have been attractive to fundamentalist brothers. Are we forgetting our Lord’s admonition, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24)?

The Bible doctrine of separation teaches that religious leaders who promote false doctrines about Christ, false doctrines about revelation, and false doctrines about the simple gospel are false apostles from whom we must separate.

Ecclesiastical Separation from Disobedient Brothers

Unity and sanctity are the rules of Christian experience within the boundaries of the orthodoxy mentioned above (Eph. 2:21). Jesus made two requests of the Father in His high-priestly prayer for His people: (1) unity (John 17:11); and (2) sanctity (v. 17). Just as the marriage relationship simultaneously constitutes the most profound commitment to unity and to separation known to a couple, so also the relationship believers enjoy in union with Christ constitutes a profound reality of unity dependent upon a faithful commitment to separation. Union with Christ and His people is an act of consecration. Where the commitment to separation fails, the force of unity weakens.

Two forms of this breakdown are mentioned in the New Testament, one involving an otherwise orthodox church member whose immorality fails to live up to his profession of saving faith (Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 5:9-13, 2 Thess. 3:6), and another involving an otherwise orthodox church leader whose teachings or disobedience create divisions within the body of Christ (Acts 20:30, Rom. 16:17-18, 2 John 11). It is important not to confuse these challenges, for they call for somewhat different responses, but it is also important to appreciate what they have in common. In both cases a failed commitment to the sanctity or purity of the church damages its unity. Dr. Bauder invites his readers to choose the unity of the church over the purity of the church as “the primary motive of fundamentalism” (*Four Views*, p. 21). This proposal, however, fails to appreciate the linkage between purity and unity. Unity depends upon purity. Therefore, purity comes before unity as primary in the responsibility of fundamentalism.

Concern for the purity of the church expresses

itself in two distinct ways, depending upon which challenge mentioned above threatens the testimony of Christ. In the first case, the immoral church member, local church discipline is the correct response. This church decision first admonishes in a brotherly way in order to encourage restoration (2 Thess. 3:15). Ultimately, in cases where repentance never comes, the so-called brother’s profession must be disbelieved and the immoral man must be expelled from membership and treated like other unbelievers (Matt. 18:17). This is an important responsibility related to the purity of the church, but it is not what this article refers to when it calls for ecclesiastical separation from disobedient brothers.

Instead, the responsibility in view here bears greater resemblance to the responsibilities of faithful church leaders in response to false teachers. Just like a pastor must guard the flock of God from grievous wolves attacking from without, so also must he watch for perverse betrayals rising up from within (Acts 20:29-30). These betrayals come in the form of good words and fair speeches that cause division through disobedience (Rom. 16:17-19), and the officially sanctioned disobedience is often an act of association in violation of the Bible’s command to separate from false teachers (2 John 7-11).

John tells us that those who bid false teachers Godspeed are partakers in their evil deeds (v. 11). This means that it is possible to deny the doctrine of Christ by giving Christian recognition to someone who denies the doctrine of Christ. This is new evangelicalism, and it is a spirit of disobedience that has divided the body of Christ for generations just as it divided Jehoshaphat and Micaiah in the days of the king’s compromise with Ahab (2 Chron. 19:2). As with false teachers, those who participate in the evil deeds of false teachers through their ministry associations must be people we mark and avoid in view of the division they have caused. The prophet Haggai was correct when he warned that uncleanness spreads through association in a way that cleanness cannot (Hag. 2:10-14).

Some object to the practicality of this responsibility by labeling the practice secondary or tertiary separation. The question is often asked, “Do you separate from the one who fellowships with the one who fellowships with the one who fellowships with the apostate?” Clearly, this question has little to do with the letter or spirit of the Bible doctrine of separation. Instead, what the doctrine calls for in the heart of the man of God is a Pauline passion for the protection of God’s people from false teachers and a willingness to feel the same way about otherwise orthodox men who lack that passion when they become partakers in those evil deeds. Paul had an answer from his heart to the question, “What are your separatist convictions and how do they regulate your ministry?” This is the question we must ask ourselves and others, and we must be satisfied only with an answer from the heart that faithfully articulates a commitment to ecclesiastical separation from false teachers and ecclesiastical separation from brothers with disobedient ministry associations.

IBFNA 2013 Conference Pictures



Pastor Mason



Pastor Harris



Uno battles



Pastor Dear



The Word of Christ richly dwelling



Working the tenors and basses



Good leadership in action



Pastor Reinhardt



Pastor Hobi



A tour around an Amish farm



Pastor Payne



Pastor Raymond



Greg & Heather Murray



The Ward men -- our trusty sound crew



Dr. Foster



Missionary Owen



Edifying fellowship



Practice makes perfect



From generation to generation



Care for our kids



Pastor Kaufman



A brass blessing



Pastor McCubbins



An appreciative audience



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