

Separation Issues - 1

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Preached on: Sunday, April 6, 2008

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All right. Today we are dealing with a very important subject. It really came up in part of our discussion last Lord's Day in Sunday School as we were going through the book of Galatians and began to address something of the issue of separation and what separation is, what separation entails, what it is that we are to separate from. And I started to make, at the end of that class, what potentially would have been a controversial statement, one that could have been misunderstood. And I refrained, which is unusual. I refrained from making the statement at the end of that class when we had no other time to address it. And the more I thought of it the more I felt that this might be an opportunity to address the whole issue of separation and the church's obligation to deal with these issues in terms of separation. A lot of misunderstanding.

You have those that will view separation in terms of the mirror. They look in the mirror and they see what they are. They see everything that they believe no matter how down the line of essentials and fundamentals it might be. And they conclude that if you don't look exactly like me, if you don't believe in everything that I believe in, if you don't dot every "I" and cross every "T" the way I do, then we are going to separate one from the other. And they do it with a great deal of anger. They do it, often times, with a great deal of potential bitterness in their hearts towards those that don't look exactly like they look.

I want to make it very clear that the mirror is not the standard of separation. It is the Word of God and we must understand what those issues are.

Now the statement that I was going to make at the end of the class dealt with some of the application of this in regard to some of the things that we will mandate, some of the things that we will put in terms of what the church seeks to teach the people in regard to how to live, personal separation. Remember, there are those three aspects of separation. Ecclesiastical separation, that is, our separation from apostasy, from those that preach another gospel and that is a very serious thing.

We have the personal separation from the world. That is that every single believer is called upon by God to be a separate people, to be a holy people. That is what holy is. When we talk about holiness we are talking about separation. We are talking about a distinction between us and the world. God is the standard. He is holy. Therefore we are to be holy. So the very concept of holiness, personal holiness, brings us into the very topic here of biblical separation.

And then, of course, the disciplinary separation that will have some thing to do with what we talk about today as well.

But it really boils down in many ways to what holiness looks like. And I say the statement that I was going to make that potentially is controversial—particularly among those that aren't thinking—usually the problems that I have with people over what I say come from non-thinking people. So I give that caveat just so in case you begin to question what I am saying. Just kidding, although I am not.

Truth is universal. All right? Let me make this statement. Truth is universal. But the application of truth, what truth in application looks like is going to be situationally, temporally and culturally defined. Now that is the statement that is very frequently misunderstood. I make that statement and people automatically accuse me of situational ethics. I oppose situational ethics. The standard for ethics is always the Word of God, pure and simple. We must be guided by that truth. But the bottom line is that truth looks different, truth is going to look different—whether we want to admit it or not—truth is going to look different depending upon time, depending upon culture, depending upon certain situations.

I have in my office, for instance, a picture of the great Puritan John Owen. And if John Owen were to come here most likely immediately upon seeing him most of you would blow him off. He has hair down to his shoulders and he had a frilly collar on. And you would associate that long hair and frilly collar as being something other than what you regard as holy. But you would blow him off. But I guarantee you, in the day in which John Owen lived, that long hair and that hair down to his shoulder and that frilly collar did not speak to them as what it tends to speak to us today, just an illustration.

We look at truth in the Old Testament dispensation, the application of that truth, I should say. And it looks different than what it does today. So we have to be ready to recognize that the church then has the responsibility—and this is what I want to be arguing here—the church has the responsibility in its society, in the time and the situation and the culture in which it ministers, to guide the people, to instruct the people as to what that holiness is going to look like.

Now, we live in a day—and I suppose it is every day the same, but it is the day in which we live—where in one sense nobody likes to be told what to do. We have this independent spirit and we just bristle up against anyone instructing us what to do. And now that we are Christians if we can find something in the Bible to justify that independency then we are all the happier to do so and that is typically done within the framework of Christian liberty. I have liberty to do this. I have liberty to do that and once you start telling me that I can't, you are infringing upon my Christian liberty.

And we are accused, then, if we mandate anything, of being legalists. And I get sick and tired of all of the use of these terms—Christian liberty, legalist, libertine, whatever—that we throw around without any biblical foundation. Typically today a legalist is anyone that happens to be a little right than I. If they have a few more standards than I do or

have a greater standard in a particular area than I, then they are a legalist. A libertine is anyone just to the left of me. But, again, it is because I am the standard, all right? I am the standard. If you agree with me fine. If you are more strict than me, you are a legalist. If you are freer than I am, you are a libertine.

And, I say, these terms are thrown around. Biblical terms, supposedly, but without any biblical foundation. Now I want to address this, I say, because the Free Church is very often accused of being legalistic. You are a legalistic bunch because you have certain restrictions that you ask your people to follow. And some of these are matters, even, of coming into the membership of the church. Does the church have a right? Does the church have a right to impose certain restrictions for membership or not?

Now that, really, I say, is the bottom line. But rather than just starting in the middle and looking at all of the specific applications... What about this? What about this? What about that? And we may get to that. This may take longer than just one Sunday school class. I don't know. And I don't want to avoid talking about the specific issues. But we have to understand that there is a biblical foundation. We just don't start in the air, as it were, saying, "Don't do this. Don't do this." There are biblical reasons.

And I want to take a few moments today to establish what the biblical mandate is that we have as a church to ask the people that are coming into the membership of the church to conform to. Do we have that right?

Often, you know, say, it is easier—and I think I made this statement last Lord's Day evening in announcing this topic, you know. We have people say, "You know, it is easier to get into heaven than it is a Free Church," you see.

"You know, to get into heaven all you have to do is believe and repent and to become a Free Presbyterian you can't do this. You can't do that. You have got to look like... And you are a bunch of legalistic people."

Now part of this that's to be very, very foundational in what is the church. What is the Church? We think of the Church, really, in two different perspectives, two broad perspectives. There is a sense in which the Church of Jesus Christ is an organism. Can I use a couple of words here? I want to talk about an organism, a living entity and an organization, a body politic if you will. And both of those words apply to the Church of Jesus Christ. There is the Church as a living organism, as a living entity. And those that are redeemed, those that are believers in Christ, those that have repented of their sins from every age, from every place on earth through every time in which this planet will exist are members of the Church as an organism. It doesn't matter whether you were Jew or Gentile. It doesn't matter whether you lived before or after the cross. It doesn't matter whether you live in America or Europe or wherever. It is boundless in terms of time, in terms of place and circumstance to be a believer in Jesus Christ, a member of the elect body of Christ. And the only requirement, as it were, for membership in the Church as an organism is that saving union with Jesus Christ. That's the Church as an organism. And the extent of that Church is ultimately known only by God. It is only God, ultimately,

that knows the extent of that Church, but he does know it and he knows it infallibly because he knows those that are his.

Now the Church as an organization, however, is a visible entity. The Church as an organism is invisible. We speak of the invisible Church. Only God can see it. Only God knows who are members of that invisible Church. The Church as an organization is a visible entity. It is something that we can see. Now how closely, how closely the invisible Church corresponds to the Church visible, again, only God knows. Only God knows how many in the Church organized are really members of the Church as an organism. God knows the heart. We understand that.

But as a visible entity comprised of different congregations, different denominations, every true Church, I dare say, is going to strive for a regenerated communicant membership. That is one of the things that we strive for here in the Free Church. We are striving for a regenerated communicant membership; that those and those of you that have come into the church, we hear your testimony. We listen to your story of conversion. But, after all is said and done, we can only take you at your word. We can only take you at your word. You have a profession. But it is our desire in our organized church to have a regenerated communicant membership. We want it to correspond. But, bottom line, only God knows. Only God knows.

Now how closely that corresponds, I say, is a matter of omniscience. But man can only evaluate. Man can only evaluate on the basis of what he sees. God looks on the heart. Man looks on the outside. Well, you know, that's a great gulf there, certainly, but it is simply a matter of fact.

It is not saying, therefore, that we ought not look on the outside. People apply it that way.

“God looks on the heart. Man looks on the outside. Therefore don't look...”

No, that's not what it is saying. Man does look on the outside. Sometimes our judgments are skewed and sometimes judgments are going to be wrong, but it is on the outside that men can look. That is the only place we can look. And so as an organized church, given the limitation that we have, that we can only see on the outside and it is our desire to bring our church as best as we possibly can into conformity to that body of Christ do we have then the right to make restrictions. Does the church as a visible organization have the right, the authority to be more restrictive, then, in its membership than the Church as an organism?

And before I answer that in the affirmative—and I am going to answer that in the affirmative—we do have a right. Every church has the right. We have different denominations. All right? We have different denominations that have restrictions. You join a Baptist Church. They put the restriction upon you that you must be immersed before membership. They have a right to do that. They have a right to do that. Do you have to be baptized to get into heaven? No. We have examples of those, not the least of which the dying thief that was not. So baptism is not a requirement for entering into the

body of Christ. But we have visible churches all over creation that make that a prerequisite. Do they have a right to do that? Yes, they do. Yes, they do. And I am just using that as an example to illustrate that it's not just us. All right? It's not just us that have visible and external requirements, as it were.

Now we want those to be according to the Word of God, but I say we do have the right. Do we have the right to impose our interpretations and applications of Scripture upon our communicant membership? And, again, I am going to answer that ultimately here in the affirmative.

Now, before I give you the biblical reasons for doing that, let me address some of the primary objections that are immediately raised every time we come to talk about this: the issues of Christian liberty and the issues of freedom of conscience. All right, let me make sure that we understand. And, again, here are some terms that we just throw up and we use and we throw out without any biblical understanding of what those terms are.

Again, we typically define Christian liberty as whatever I want to do and the freedom of conscience as whatever I feel is appropriate. I want us to understand biblically what these terms are really saying and be careful, then, that we don't use these as excuses for getting upset or whatever when the church does give various instructions.

Now, let me talk, first of all, about freedom of conscience. We are Protestants. We are Protestants. And we believe in the freedom of man's conscience before God. We affirm and I affirm that apart from Scripture, apart from Scripture there is no authority on earth that owns my conscience. All right? Understand that, please. Apart from the Lord and apart from Scripture, there is authority on earth that owns my conscience, not even the church. The church does not own my conscience. The Free Church does not own my conscience. My conscience is owned by God. And God alone, then, is the Lord, the owner, the governor of my conscience. I would recommend that you read chapter 20 in our confession of faith that deals with this matter of liberty, this matter of conscience. And much of what I say today will be implications of what those statements are.

So I am saying that only God owns my conscience. But before we rush off with some maverick independence here, let's consider what the conscience is. What is the conscience? And why is it that only God owns my conscience? The conscience is, very simply, that moral sense or that sense of moral ought-ness... Can I put it that way? That makes no sense except to me. It is that sense of moral ought-ness to distinguish, the capacity to distinguish between moral right and moral wrong. All right? Now that is the conscience in a nutshell. The conscience is the ability, it is the ability, the capacity that we have to distinguish between moral right and moral wrong. It is what makes us different than every other creature, part of our being in the image of God. We have that conscience that has the capacity to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.

Now, if we understand that, then it is not a surprise that I would say that the Lord is the absolute authority to determine what is right and what is wrong. It is God that determines everything that is right and everything that is wrong. It is not society that determines

rightness and wrongness. It is not any individual that determines rightness and wrongness. It is the Lord that determines and has revealed in his Word that which is right and that which is wrong. And so as our consciences, then are submitted to what the Lord teaches, what the Lord reveals concerning right and wrong, we, then, develop that ability to distinguish between right and wrong, what we ought to do, what we ought not to do.

Now the conscience can be seared. The conscience can be led astray. The conscience can be influenced by sources that have no right to influence. We must be careful. God is truth. God is truth. God reveals truth. That is why we say, then, that only God has the authority, only God has the right to own my conscience.

So let's keep that in mind. And I am going to make a distinction here and there is a significant and an essential difference between surrendering a conscience. It is going to be a significant difference between surrendering conscience and submitting your will to do something or to not do something, to follow a code of conduct, if you will, that may not be your particular opinion, you see. There is a difference between surrendering or binding the conscience, all right?

And I say, as Protestants, you start talking to me about binding a conscience and it puts the shivers down my spine, you see. I do not want to bind anyone's conscience. It is not my job. It is not my authority. It is not my prerogative to determine what is right and what is wrong in that ultimate and absolute sense. So we don't bind consciences.

But there is a significant difference, I say, between...if we don't see this we are going to be forever in bondage every time we turn around. There is a significant difference between surrendering and submitting my will and my behavior to a certain code of conduct than, as it were, violating my conscience and, you know, I use this illustration, you know, I have used this illustration before, but it, you know, it makes the point that I want to make. You know, all those years that I was at BJ they had certain restrictions and certain codes of conduct that I submitted to. I don't know if they are all the same now as they were then, but there were certain things. You couldn't go off campus with blue jeans on. Is that still...? I don't know if that is still there or not.

Now those of you that have seen me around here you know that I look right good in blue jeans. You know, I really do and I am not afraid to tell you that. I look good in denim. But in all those years that I was at BJ, all right, and all those years I was at BJ while I did not...I did...I really did not believe that denim was sinful, all right? And I still don't. All right? Denim is not sinful. But for reasons they had that restriction. Fine. In all the years that I was there—and I suppose I slipped up a few times, yeah—but for the most part I obeyed that particular regulation and I didn't go off to do business in denim. I didn't do it. Not because I had a conscience against it, you see, not because I had a conscience against it. I didn't. But I had become employed by that organization. This is what they said, code of conduct. Fine. No big deal, no big deal. And the fact that I didn't wear denim, you know, it robbed people of a wonderful sight, I suppose, but it wasn't a violation of my conscience, all right? I didn't feel, "Oh, man, you know, they are

binding...” No, it was just a matter of following a particular code of conduct, submitting my will and my behavior to that and it was no big deal. And it got me out of a lot of stuff.

You know, there were times when Sandra, you know, wanted me to go do something.

“Oh, run to the store.”

“Oh, you know, if I have to...I’ve got my jeans on. If I go to the store to get that for you I’ve got to change clothes, put a tie on just to buy you a jug of milk. Can’t you get it yourself?”

And it got me out of doing a lot of stuff, you see? It got me out of doing a lot of stuff.

So you know how to use it to your advantage. All right, you understand what I am saying. Had no conscience against it. And it wasn’t a binding on my conscience. I didn’t feel like they were oppressing me. I voluntarily submitted myself to that. No big deal, no big deal.

They never asked me, “Do you believe that...?” You know we signed a creed every year. But part of that creed was not, “Do you believe that denim is sin?” All right? I never made that statement. All right. I never made that statement.

All right. Understand what I am saying, please. There is a difference between surrendering and submitting my behavior to a certain code of conduct even that I may not have a conviction against it for the sake of that body. But the conscience itself, I say, is the domain of God.

Now, this will come into play more here as we go through. Now what is Christian liberty? What do we mean by Christian liberty? And here is the big one. Here is the big one. And I say too often, too often, this whole idea of liberty is determined from an independent, from an independent maverick mentality, all right, from an independent maverick mentality.

Liberty, I say, is what I feel I have a right to do and because I have a right to do, I can do it. Legalism, legalism is typically understood, then, as you telling me to do something or not allowing me to do something that I have a perfect right to do. You are violating my liberty. If you don’t let me do what I want to do, you are violating my liberty.

Now to those people that define liberty that way, my suggestion, people, is just read your Bible. Just read your Bible. That is not what Christian liberty is from a biblical perspective. It is not. It is not. Liberty in the Scripture is never freedom from restraint. It is never freedom from restraint. And don’t give me this stuff that, you know, grace overrules law, we say, grace overrules law.

“I am under grace, therefore law...”

Read your Bible. Grace and law are never at enemies one with the other. Grace and law work happily one with the other when they are put in the proper perspective and proper relationship one with the other. But this whole notion of Christian liberty being defined in “I have a right to do it. I have no conscience against it and therefore you had better not tell me what I can do, what I can’t do and so forth.”

Liberty, you read your New Testament. I don’t have time, really, to go through all of the passage. We may back up and do this some time. I don’t know. But Christian liberty in the New Testament always—and I underline, emphasize, underscore always, always—expresses itself in the willingness to refrain from what conscience may allow rather than demanding to do what conscience might permit.

I want to repeat that. I want to repeat that. And this, I say, is the synopsis of what the Bible teaches us concerning Christian liberty. Christian liberty, Christian freedom is always—underscore always—it always expresses itself in the willingness to refrain from what conscience may allow rather than demanding to do what conscience permits. And most today that want to do what they want to do in the name of Christian liberty have it right backwards, have it right backwards. They are using and claiming Christian liberty as their right to do something. But in the Bible, every example, every passage that deals with the issue of Christian liberty... “I have a freedom to do it.” Yeah, ok. “I have no conscience against it.” Fine. But Christian liberty is always the willingness to refrain from what conscience may allow.

A willful submission, a willful submission to authority outside of self is not a violation of conscience, but rather it is the biblical exercise of liberty. All right? Get that straight. Willful submission to an authority outside of self is not a violation of conscience, but it is, rather, the biblical exercise of liberty. Grace is always happy with restraints. Liberty always recognizes that there are limitations.

You think of the very imagery that Christ uses for coming to him in the gospel. Are you heavy laden? Yeah? Have all...? Yeah? Christ says, “Would you come unto me? You come unto me and you take my what? You take my yoke upon you.”

Here is a gracious invitation. Here is a gracious invitation that will take care of all of the problems and all of the sin that we... “You come unto me,” Christ says. And those that come unto Christ, those that know the Son, those that know the truth are free, right? Here is freedom. To know Christ is freedom.

And Christ says, “When you come unto me, you take my yoke upon you.”

Now it is an easy yoke. It is a happy yoke, but it is a yoke nonetheless. Now I am not a farmer. I am not a farmer and it has been more than once in my life I’ve given thanks to the Lord for that. I am not a farmer and I have never, you know, plowed a field using oxen. But I know enough to know what a yoke does. You put that yoke on the animal and that yoke restricts the animal. That yoke determines where the animal goes and how it turns and all that it does. The yoke is restrictive. And Christ says, “You come unto

me, yeah, for all of this freedom. For, indeed, the truth will set you free. The truth will set you free. You come unto me,” Christ says, “and you take my yoke.” But he says it is an easy yoke, it is a light burden, it is a happy thing. But it is nonetheless a yoke. Grace has restrictions. Grace has limitations. Grace is going to look like something in the life. It is going to look like something in the life.

I say to resist, then, authority and here is where you want to take a look at your confession of faith. Don't tell me this is...don't tell me what I am saying is not reformed theology in a sense. Look at your confession of faith, chapter 20, particularly in paragraph four. You will find this basic notion that to resist authority, to resist authority on the pretense of Christian liberty is resisting the ordinance of God. It is resisting the ordinance of God. And the purpose of Christian liberty—this is from our confession again—is for the mutual upholding and preserving of the body. That is the purpose of Christian liberty. The purpose of Christian liberty is not just to give me the personal freedom to do whatever I want to do. No, no, no. The purpose of Christian liberty taught in the Scripture, summarized in our confession of faith is for the mutual upholding and preserving of the body. It is always geared toward others, not toward self. Christian liberty is always focused on others, not upon self.

Now I don't want to get into the game here as to weaker and stronger brethren. Paul, in discussing this does it in terms of those that are strong and those that are weak. I don't want to play that game right now because invariably everybody thinks they are the strong ones and other ones are weak ones. Fine. I am not going to play that game. The bottom line here is that Christian liberty is always exercised with a view to others, never with a view to self, never, if we follow the mandate of the Scripture.

Why, I get so sick and sore of these people today that use Christian liberty as their excuse for exercising their right to do this, their right to do this, their right... It's not Christian liberty. Oh, it may be liberty. You know, it may be the American dream, you see. But it is not what the Scripture teaches concerning what liberty is.

All right, now, that's just defining a couple of terms before I say what I am going to say. I have got three points here in an outline and I haven't gotten to the first one yet. I don't want to play Cairns here, but I am just now getting to what I want to say.

Understand what the Church is. Understand what the Church is. Understand what we are talking about in terms of liberty and don't interpret biblical liberty, Christian liberty, I say, in the light of some individualistic, American dream as to personal freedom, you see. And understand what conscience is. And there is a distinction, I say, between surrendering my abilities or my behavior, submitting my behavior than binding my conscience. The binding of conscience and violating a conscience is to make you do something, all right. If I were to enforce you and require you to do something that you had a conviction against, now we are talking about a biblical violation. But if I will voluntarily not do something that I think I have every right to do, big deal, big deal. That is not a violation of my conscience. And, I say, it is a manifestation of what true biblical liberty is.

All right. Now with that background we come, then, to the basic question. Does, then, the church, does the church have a right, then, to be more restrictive in its requirements for membership? Does the church have a right to set before the people what truth ought to look like in the culture in which we live, in the time in which we live? Does the church have a right to do this or not?

Now understand a few things here. And it really...this is getting right down to the core issues of what the church is. I say, first of all that the purpose of the church—I am just going to be suggestive here—that the purpose of the church requires restrictions. The purpose of the church requires restrictions.

Now there is a three fold function of the church, one of which is particularly germane to what we are talking about here. Church has a three fold function: to glorify God, to evangelize the lost and to edify believers. All right? We can sum up the purpose of the church as an organization. I am not talking about the church as an organism now. I am talking about the church as an organization, this functioning body, this body politic, if you will. Three fold purpose in everything that we do: to glorify God. In all of our efforts as best we can to evangelize the lost and to edify believers. Edifying believers, to bring them to spiritual maturity, to fit them for the work of the ministry, to inspire them, to equip them for duty. Not to rule conscience, not to rule conscience, but to take the Word of God which is the determiner of conscience and teach the people what God wants us to understand as right, as wrong for the building up, the guiding of the body, personal purity. If we are going to declare God's glory we have got to be pure and holy as God is. If we are going to evangelize we have to maintain a pure witness so that requires the setting up of various parameters. So we keep those in mind.

The second thing that I would say is this, that the ministry of the church demands restrictions. The ministry of the church demands restrictions. There are three marks. And this, again, is historic, reformed, orthodox theology. There are three marks of a true church. A true church is characterized, first of all, by the faithful preaching of the Word of God. All right? No preaching of the Word, you are not a true church. The faithful preaching of the Word of God is essential to a true church.

Number two, the right administration of the sacraments, the right administration of the sacraments, a mark of the true church. Baptism, Lord's Supper. This is our communion Sunday. We are going to be administering that sacrament here today. That is the duty, that is the responsibility of the church. The sacraments are not private matters. They are not things that are just done in the confines of the home. It is the administration of the church. Restrictions, guidelines to make sure for that right administration.

And then number three. The faithful and consistent discipline, faithful and consistent discipline, one of the three marks of the true Church.

Now these are interrelated, but the third, really, I suppose is the key issue for us now. Every true church—and this, I say, is historic, reformed, protestant understanding of what

the church is—must faithfully and consistently exercise discipline. Discipline is to maintain the purity of doctrine required to the faithful preaching. I say these are all interrelated. To guard the practice that is necessary for the protection of the sacraments and its right administration. Discipline serves the first two functions. What is right doctrine? What is right practice?

We sometimes, in guarding the table—and the church has the right and the church has the responsibility to guard this table—so we sometimes exercise discipline because of this or that and we withhold that sacrament for various reasons, church right, church demand.

Now I am saying to do that, to exercise discipline, there has to be some standard by which judgments are made concerning orthodoxy, right doctrine and ortho-practice, right behavior. All right? The church must have the guidelines, must set the parameters up, then, to identify what is orthodoxy, to guard that orthodoxy and the orthopraxis, the right practice. An the Word of God is the standard. The Word of God must be the standard.

Preaching, then, preaching, then, always links—and how often have we heard this—that preaching must link doctrine and practice. Got to be a connection there. Orthodoxy, right doctrine, orthopraxis, right practice, right behavior. Those two things are inseparably linked one with the other.

And there is a problem that I see in some reformed churches, a problem that I see in some fundamentalist churches. And they make the same error, but applied differently. There is often a disconnect between the preaching and the practice, between the doctrine and the duty. It is an error, all right? It is an error to declare truth without specifying the relevance of that truth to life. Are you with me? It is an error to declare truth without specifying the relevance of that truth to life. And I think one of the faults that I see sometimes in reformed circles, strong on truth. Here is the truth. Here is the truth. Here is the truth. Here is the truth. And the truth that they would hold is the same truth that we would affirm and preach. But the application of that truth, the way that truth is ultimately going to look like in life is left out of the picture, you see. Let the Holy Spirit take it where it will.

Well, I believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Don't misunderstand me. But I am saying that it is the responsibility of the preacher. It is the responsibility of the church, it is, to show what that truth looks like. And I say it is an error to declare truth without specifying the relevance of truth to life.

It is equally an error to set up standards of living that are divorced from truth. And I think this is what happens so often in some of our traditional, typical fundamentalist works. Focus now upon application, upon standards without any reference to truth. And this breeds, then, “Do this. Do that. Here is what Christians look like,” without any relevance or without any argument from truth. And I say both of those are wrong. Both of those are wrong.

And I think, sometimes, and, you know...we...in focusing upon the application of stuff,

on what the truth looks like in our day and our generation, we fail to show the biblical reason for it and that's what breeds the bitterness. And that's what breeds the rebellion often.

Well, if it is just a matter of church or parent or whatever without... you know, I can understand that. You have to have both. We have to have both.

Truth apart from ethics, behavior, is nothing but theory. All right? Truth apart from ethics is nothing but theory. Ethics apart from truth is legalism. All right? Ethics apart from truth is legalism. It is imperative for the Church, then, to make compliance with truth a determined practice, a requisite for membership if we are going to take seriously our charge to discipline.

If we are just...you know, how can we...we cannot discipline as the church must do in protecting truth, in guarding the sacraments without, I say, developing some standards by which that truth is going to be manifest. It is part of our job to give a credible...right? It is part of our job as a church to give a credible visibility to the body of Christ. All right? We want to give a credible visibility to the body of Christ. Therefore, a holy people what is Christ like. We are to be different from the world.

You cannot believe the Bible. You cannot believe the Bible without coming to the conclusion that God demands his people to be separate from the world. Ok? Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. We must be separate from the world. Now that's the truth. That's the truth. You deny that, you are denying the clear, unmistakable statements of the Word of God. We must be separate from the world personally in whatever way.

Now what does that look like? What does separation from the world look like? And whose responsibility—look at the clock, there, at my watch. It is not looking good. What is the responsibility of the church? Does the church have a responsibility to guide the people, to show the people what holiness looks like, what we believe holiness looks like in the world in which we live? Yes. Yes.

Now unhappily, my time is gone. I want to come back to this. All right? I want to come back to this. I want to finish this up. And I want to get into specifics. All right? I want to get into specifics and I want to open this up, ultimately, for questions because, frankly, I am getting tired of being accused of being a legalist. I'm getting tired of it. I'm getting tired of it. I know I am not. When we start looking at what the Bible says, do we have a right—and we will...if you want to talk about alcohol, I will take about alcohol. If you want to talk about music, I'll talk about music. All of these things, you see, that all of a sudden are becoming issues, all of a sudden are becoming issues and now all of a sudden the Free Church is legalistic. Where are we coming from? You see, where are we coming from?

“I have a right,” you say. “I have a right,” you say, “to drink.”

Ok. Let's say you do. Let's say you do. Is it a violation of your conscience not to drink for the welfare of the body? I think not. I think not. So we will talk about these. I don't want to be secretive. I don't want to be playing a game here where you just throw out the rules. "Now, do it because we say."

No. I don't want you to do anything because we say it. I've got no right to tell you to do anything. I've got no right. But if we are going to follow the book, if we are going to follow the book, do I have an obligation as a minister of the gospel to give specific instructions, to evaluate the days in which we live, the circumstances in which we live and say, "People, given where we are and given what the world sees and what the world says we must be different." Church has a right to make those guidelines, not to be mean and not to be cantankerous and not just to be different. Who? I don't want to be different from everyone. That's not the idea, but to give a visible credibility to that which ultimately is invisible, the body of Christ.

Well, I want to come back to this. I know I've got the other two Sunday school classes in here. If you want to come back, you can come back. Just don't do it next week because I'll be in Alabama next week. The week after that we are going to come back and deal with this. So, Brad, if you want to bring your kids here in two weeks. Charlie, bring them back. And we'll open up to questions.

But I am setting the foundation here because I want you to understand that there is an ecclesiastical foundation for what we are doing here. We are not just picking this up to be different from anybody else. It is what we believe the Word of God is saying. There is a biblical foundation here. We are not just starting up here. We are starting at the bedrock. It is what I am trying to do.

I trust this will give us some help. Well, we have got to quit. Let's pray.

Our gracious Lord, we do pray that you would give us understanding of these important issues in the day in which we live. We do recognize, Lord, that terms are thrown around and jargon is used to make us feel bad about some of the things that we believe. Lord, lets get down to what the Bible says and not to be afraid of what the Bible says regardless or let's live in the light of this book. Let it be our rule for everything that we believe and everything that we do. So bless us to that end. Let this be a helpful and a profitable discussion. And do help us, Lord, now, as we come to the hour of worship, this our communion Sunday. Give us a good remembrance of the things of Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.