

DANGERS

CONSERVATISM

LIBERALISM

Sermon  SNAPSHOTS

# The Dangers of Liberalism

The word "liberal" is not a bad word, per-se. In fact, there are times when it is good to be liberal – generous, free, open, or progressive. For example, we should be liberal in our prayers (1Th.5:17), or liberal in love (Mk.12:30). But in this lesson, we consider a dangerous kind of liberalism – which takes us beyond the doctrine of Christ (2Jn.9-11). Later, we'll look at "the rest of the story" – The Problems of Conservatism.

## Liberalism rejects revealed truth for its preconceptions

- "Gnostics" [knowing ones/spiritual elitists], manifested an early form of liberalism (1-2-3 Jn.)
- They believed matter was inherently evil, so they could not accept Christ "in the flesh" (2Jn.7)
- Thus, in an effort to be consistent with their preconceptions, they rejected this truth about Jesus
- Liberalism does the very same thing today! It still rejects truth to uphold its preconceptions!

## Truth is determined by "the doctrine of Christ" (2Jn.9-11)

- Liberals say it is the "doctrine about Christ," (v.7); but surely not limited to His humanity (flesh)
- So even if it's just "about Christ," it would surely include His Deity & Kingly authority! (Ac.2:36)
- But in truth, it's "the doctrine FROM Christ" – thus, it includes ALL that He taught! (2Jn.4, 6, 9)
- Thus, if we "progress" & "remain" beyond Christ's teaching, we have no fellowship with God!

## Consider some modern-day manifestations of liberalism

- It questions every "tradition," to promote change (authority, or worship – but 2Th.2:15)
- It redefines sin, giving it a "positive" spin (we're not "digressive" but "progressive," – but 2Jn.9)
- It is incremental: progressive sectarianism → denominationalism → modernism → humanism
- Then, it cries "foul" when it's "chickens come home to roost" ("This isn't what I bargained for!")

## Some things which might identify a spirit of liberalism

- Liberals see every potential problem as a "major crisis," which needs a "grand" solution
- But usually, their "grand" solutions are superficial, i.e., let's just throw money at problem!
- Liberals try to be "non-judgmental," tolerating almost anything – except a conservative!
- But ultimately, it rules by force: "If you conservatives don't like it, leave!" (3Jn.9-10)

## Learning to recognize some the "defenses" of liberalism

- In truth, they are unconcerned with what the Bible says, but they do offer some "defenses"
- They defend it by ridicule [vs. reason] – hence, in their eyes, "You're just like the 'one cuppers'"
- They defend it by emotionalism [vs. rationalism], hence, you're "anti-preaching;" or "anti-orphan"
- They defend it by expediency [vs. authority] -- but they are merely expediting their

Hopefully, this lesson has helped you understand how "liberalism" is a dangerous enemy of Christ. We must continually remind ourselves of the dangers of liberalism, lest our "lampstand" be removed from "its place" with Jesus (Rv.1:12-13, 20; 2:5). And, we must be "conservative enough" to limit ourselves to a "thus says the Lord" for all we do religiously. Only then shall we avoid this dangerous enemy of Christ! UR baptism, and see if it was done as the Scriptures teach. If it wasn't, then your baptism is unscriptural, period! *If you were baptized wrong, then you must do it right* (Acts 19:1-6).



# The Dangers of Conservatism

Our previous lesson discussed "liberalism," but this one will address "conservatism" – i.e., "the disposition to maintain existing order." When it comes to Biblical matters, conservatism is both good and right! (2Th.2:15; cf. Ga.1:6-10; Col.3:17; 2Jn.9; etc.). But conservatism has inherent consequences – such as the need to "contend for the faith" (Jude 3). It also has inherent dangers! In this lesson, we will examine some

## Pharisaic traditionalism

- That is, conserving conservatism with greater conservatism – "man-made" rules (Col.2:20-23)
- For instance, "official" Rabbinical interpretations, like rules concerning the Sabbath (Ac.1:12)
- Modern examples: One cup (1Cor.11:26); no classes (1Cor.14:23); no women teachers (1Tm.2:12);
- No eating in the meeting house (Ac.20:11); modesty to the inch (1Tm.2:9-10); etc.

## Creedalism

- Creedalism "chooses" certain items – and ONLY those few items are really important!
- For instance, only certain oaths count (Mt.23:16-22); do some things, but neglect others (v.23)
- Modern example: No organ, no orphan home, and no kitchen – yet the members are worldly
- Sometimes, an actual creed (written or unwritten) is developed (e.g., "the 28 questions")

## Isolationism

- Yes, we are to "be separate" – meaning not to partake of or support SIN! (2Cor.6:14-18)
- But God never intended for us to cut off ALL "association" with sinners! (Lk.15:1-7)
- Indeed, if we can never go around sinners, how will we ever reach them? (Ac.13:13-16)
- Yet to "conserve conservatism," we sometimes arrogantly isolate ourselves from sinners

## Heresy hunting

- Some conservatives become "conspiracy theorists," always looking for the next "issue"
- However, we must be very careful not to engage in "evil suspicions" (1Tm.6:3-5)
- Others seem to have an attitude which says, "Let's destroy Apollos!" (Ac.18:24-26)
- Still others bind matters of judgment, like where or what I can preach (a liberal church)



## Biting and devouring

- Because of our traditions, unwritten creeds, & fear of heresy, we bite & devour the faithful!
- Many times, it's NOT because they teach error, but because they are not as "hardcore" as others!
- So in "defense of truth" we think we can act like the Devil in the name of the Lord; Satan smiles!
- Paul said that if we have such an attitude, we just might be "consumed by one another!" (Gal.5:15)

## Inactivity

- Jesus spoke of some who "bind heavy burdens" yet won't do what they ask of others! (Mt.23:1-4)
- No missionary society, yet no personal evangelism; no church orphan home; yet no personal help!
- This is "law worship" we get the "reputation" of right doctrine, w/o the right practice ( Rv.3:1-2)
- Some develop such a fear of doing wrong that they do nothing at all – a "dead" faith! (Jm.2:20)

**Why do the above things happen? FEAR! Fear of liberalism paralyzes us from doing what we have every Scriptural right to do. So, because of fear, we make our own rules, become creedal, isolate ourselves, look for heresy, bite, devour and eventually die! These are some of the inherent dangers of conservatism. So, let us try to avoid these very real dangers, while simultaneously preserving apostolic tradition (2Th.2:15).**

**-Lanny Smith**

# *Fishers* Church of Christ

## JOIN US FOR *Worship!*

### Times of Service

Sunday Worship: 10 am  
Sunday Bible Study: 5 pm  
Wednesday Bible Study: 7 pm

### Our Eldership

Jan Boser (H) 773-3178 (C) 509-1828  
Al Easter (H) 585-9846 (C) 698-1846  
Randy Shouse 570-4908  
Lanny Smith 770-8077

### Contact Information

10082 East 126th Street  
Fishers, IN 46038  
(317) 577-3788

Thank you for picking up a copy of our Sermon Snapshot! We hope you will use this tool for personal study or an easy to use template when studying with friends and neighbors about important spiritual matters!

If you would like more information either through CD or download, please visit our website for these sermons and many more. If you would like a personal bible study with our evangelist or Elders please contact us as well!



**Facebook: Fishers Church of Christ**  
**Twitter: @FishersChurch**  
**Visit us online & YouTube!**  
**[www.fishers-churchofchrist.com](http://www.fishers-churchofchrist.com)**