

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM



A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out across the ground and over the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

**PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”**

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24

REVEAL

- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26

1. THE *CHURCH* AND THE *WORLD*.
2. WHY THE *WORLD HATES*
3. A *RECENT* BATTLE
4. THE *CHURCH* AND *PSEUDO TOLERANCE*
5. *POSTMODERNISM* AND THE *CHURCH*
6. *INTOLERANT* TOLERANCE
7. THE *CHURCH* AND *OBJECTIVE* TRUTH
8. LOSING *OBJECTIVE TRUTH* IN THE CHURCH
9. THE *CHURCH* AND *RATIONAL* TRUTH
10. THE *FINAL* STANDARD *OF TRUTH*

- **NEO-ORTHODOX THEOLOGY**, which rose to prominence in the first half of the twentieth century, has caused a tremendous amount of confusion about the **rationality** of truth. **NEO-ORTHODOX THEOLOGIANS INSIST THAT CHRISTIANITY IS AN IRRATIONAL BELIEF SYSTEM—A RELIGION OF “PARADOX.”**
- What they really are suggesting is that Christianity is **FULL OF CONTRADICTIONS**. **PARADOX** is a misnomer in the sense that they use it. A true paradox is a play on words, such as **“MANY WHO ARE FIRST WILL BE LAST, AND THE LAST, FIRST”** (MATT. 19:30), and **“WHOEVER WISHES TO BECOME GREAT AMONG YOU SHALL BE YOUR SERVANT”** (MATT. 20:26). But when the neo-orthodox use the term **PARADOX**, they are speaking of a real **CONTRADICTION**. **THEY REGARD ALL TRUTH AS IRRATIONAL, SELF-CONTRADICTORY, AND ABSURD TO THE LOGICAL MIND.**

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- **FAITH** in their system entails the abandonment of logic. It is a blind leap into the abyss of **IRRATIONALISM**. They borrowed their *irrationalism* from existential philosophy and made it the hallmark of their theology. In doing so, they laid the groundwork for a postmodern version of Christianity. But it is **NOT TRUE CHRISTIANITY**, because it has abandoned the rationality that is essential to truth itself.
 - The problem with such *irrationalism* is that it *nullifies* the law of non-contradiction, the essential ground of all rational thinking. If two contradictory propositions can both be true simultaneously, then an idea that opposes the truth cannot necessarily be deemed error.

- The **ANTITHESIS** of a true statement cannot automatically be judged false. That is the very same kind of thinking that lies at the heart of postmodernist tolerance. **IT IS NOT A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF TRUTH. IT IS IRRATIONALISM.**
- The apostle **PAUL** wrote, **“IF ANYONE ADVOCATES A DIFFERENT DOCTRINE AND DOES NOT AGREE WITH SOUND WORDS, THOSE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND WITH THE DOCTRINE CONFORMING TO GODLINESS, HE IS CONCEITED AND UNDERSTANDS NOTHING”** (1 TIM. 6:3–4).
- **PAUL’S** statement assumes that **THE TRUTH IS RATIONAL** and **WHATEVER CONTRADICTS THE TRUTH IS ERROR**. That is the proper Christian understanding of biblical truth. **IT IS THE ANTITHESIS OF POSTMODERN THINKING.**

- **THERE ARE SOME DIFFICULT TENSIONS IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.** For example, we believe God is **SOVEREIGN** over the human will **“THE KING’S HEART IS LIKE CHANNELS OF WATER IN THE HAND OF THE LORD; HE TURNS IT WHEREVER HE WISHES,”** (PROV. 21:1). Yet we also believe people choose freely in accord with their desires so that each one of us is morally responsible for our actions **“SO THEN EACH ONE OF US WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD,”** (ROM. 14:12). Many find those truths difficult to reconcile; yet there is no actual contradiction between them. **GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IS NOT AT ODDS WITH HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.** The two principles work in perfect harmony, even though it is not immediately obvious to us **HOW** they work. **SUCH TRUTHS ARE NOT CONTRADICTIONS;** they are not even paradoxes in the sense that neo-orthodoxy uses the term. They are difficult truths that, if anything, require us to exercise extra care in applying logical rigor. But we are not to think of them as irrational. **THEY ARE NOT.**

THE CHURCH AND INTEGRITY-START HERE

- Rounding out our list of essential principles for a biblical worldview is **INTEGRITY**. This flows naturally from the principles we looked at earlier in this series: **OBJECTIVITY** and **RATIONALITY**.
- Since Christianity places such a high premium on truth, we must acknowledge that **INTEGRITY IS AN ESSENTIAL VIRTUE AND HYPOCRISY IS A HORRIBLE VICE**.
- **INTEGRITY is a fundamental biblical qualification for all ministry**. One requirement heads every list of qualifications for church leaders in the New Testament: The man who would fill any such office must be **“ABOVE REPROACH”** (1 TIM. 3:2, 10; TITUS 1:6–7).

- Success in business, skill in public relations, or other earthly talents are not what qualify a man for leadership in the church. The supreme and primary qualification at every level of church leadership is **INTEGRITY—A LOVE FOR THE TRUTH AND CONSISTENCY IN LIVING IT OUT PRACTICALLY**. To ignore that principle is to sacrifice the premium we place on truth as Christians.
- In other words, if we really believe the **OBJECTIVE, RATIONALLY** understood truth of Scripture is both **AUTHORITATIVE** and **INCOMPATIBLE WITH ERROR**, we must not only **preach it**; we must **live it**, too. It is not enough to give lip service. If we genuinely believe that the Bible alone is divine truth, we must allow it to permeate our lives and ministry.
- To do otherwise is tantamount to denying the truth. Those who disagree may **“PROFESS TO KNOW GOD, BUT BY THEIR DEEDS THEY DENY HIM, BEING DETESTABLE AND DISOBEDIENT AND WORTHLESS FOR ANY GOOD DEED” (TITUS 1:16)**.

- **EZRA**, the high priest in **NEHEMIAH'S** time, is the prototype of what every godly minister ought to be. ***“EZRA HAD SET HIS HEART TO STUDY THE LAW OF THE LORD AND TO PRACTICE IT, AND TO TEACH HIS STATUTES AND ORDINANCES IN ISRAEL” (EZRA 7:10).***
- I remember years ago a young lady asked if I would officiate her wedding. Even though I was honored by her request, there was the question ***“ARE YOU BOTH SAVED?”*** Without hesitation she replied, ***“I AM, BUT HE'S NOT, AT LEAST NOT YET ANYWAY.”*** Her attitude was like it's no big deal. She, like a lot of people think they have the influence to change a heart. She was hurt, confused, and a little embarrassed by my decision. Very humbly I said, ***“I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T DO THAT.”*** I can't do what Scripture clearly forbids. ***“BELIEVERS ARE NOT TO BE UNEQUALLY YOKED WITH UNBELIEVERS.” (2 COR. 6:14).*** IT IS A BIG DEAL!
- She replied, ***“WELL, OK. WE UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS. WE KNOW A MINISTER FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE WHO WILL COME IN AND DO IT, SO THAT WE CAN BE MARRIED IN THE CHURCH.”***

- But here's the real question, ***WHO'S THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH?*** Is this ***YOUR*** church to be used at your discretion ***WITHOUT INTEGRITY***, or was it bought by the blood of Christ, who demands ***INTEGRITY?***
- That sort of obedience to the Word of God—an exclusive obedience to Christ—has and will continue to shape and mold our ministry for years to come. It shows up even in the way we worship. We don't entertain people. We don't have a dog-and-pony show. We gather to worship God, to exalt Christ, and to hear the Word of God preached. If need be, we practice church discipline as outlined in **(MATT. 18:15–20)**. We seek to obey what Scripture teaches, no matter how politically incorrect or out of fashion it might seem.
- And at a time when many churches are becoming more and more like the world, our goal is to be conformed more and more to the standard set forth in the Scriptures. God has blessed that, and I am convinced it is because our ***MEN*** have sought to uphold the standard of biblical integrity at every level of leadership.

- Unfortunately, the **EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT** today is drifting from these fundamental principles and has already begun to embrace **POSTMODERN IDEAS** uncritically.
- **EVANGELICALISM** is losing its footing, people's confidence in the Scriptures is eroding, and the church is losing its testimony. Fewer Christians are willing to stand against the trends of this generation—and the effects have been disastrous. **SUBJECTIVITY, IRRATIONALITY, WORLDLINESS, UNCERTAINTY, COMPROMISE**, and **HYPOCRISY** have already become commonplace among churches and organizations that once constituted the evangelical mainstream.
- The only cure, I am convinced, is **A CONSCIOUS, WHOLESALE REJECTION OF POSTMODERN VALUES AND A RETURN TO THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW WHICH EXULTS THE EXCLUSIVITY OF CHRIST. WE MUST BE FAITHFUL TO GUARD THE TREASURE OF TRUTH THAT HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO US (2 TIM. 1:14).**

Returning to the One Way