

Biblical Fidelity

Read Colossians 2:6-8

Last week, Bubba talked about the period of The Enlightenment in the late 17th and 18th centuries again and some of what came out of that. Particularly the roots of liberal theology and those who popularized the ideas and thoughts that went along with it.

What God says, is always brought into question and even though, like the Israelites, the church has come back around to the truth after drifting...there is always another drift around the corner and another battle for the truth that must be fought and won.

The battle for the truth had to take place over the theological liberalism that came out of the enlightenment as well. Though we can look at many denominations today and see that they have again abandoned the truth, there was a time when they came together to stand on the truth of scripture.

- Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others, would defend the truth of the Bible against the lies of the world
- Not just lies of the world outside the church, but the lies of the world that would be taught and believed from within the church.
 - **Jude 1:3-4** *“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”*

One place where this battle was fought was at Princeton Theological Seminary.

- Started in 1812 by Archibald Alexander
- He was the first chair of systematic theology there

Instrumental in the defense of scripture there was a professor named Charles Hodge, who published a systematic theology and fought against all the attacks on the truth for more than 50 years there.

- He was followed there by his son, A.A. Hodge (named after the first seminary president, Archibald Alexander).
- He took over as professor of systematic theology in 1878 after his father died
- He would also fight for the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy
- Taking that spot after him, in 1887, was Benjamin B. Warfield, who would continue the defense of the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

These men would follow the pattern that we have seen through church history of those who were committed to certain fundamentals, namely:

- The _____ of God as authoritative and true
 - That Christians should live by the very word of God, found only in scripture
 - That it should guide and govern the Christian worldview.
- **Warfield said:** *“When Paul declares, then, that ‘every Scripture,’ or ‘all scripture’ is the product of the Divine breath, ‘is God-breathed,’ he asserts with as much energy as he could employ that Scripture is the product of a specifically Divine operation.”*
- **Warfield said:** *“The Bible is the Word of God in such a way that when the Bible speaks, God speaks.”*
 - That is true in every word of it, not just in the red letters, or just in the New Testament

These theologians fought for what the reformers did and what many Christians had done throughout church history when the Word of God had been abandoned by the people of God. They reminded Christians that everything else should be made subject to the Bible.

- **Warfield also said:** *“Thus in every way possible, the church has borne her testimony from the beginning, and still in our day, to her faith in the Divine trustworthiness of her Scriptures, in all their affirmations of whatever kind...The church has always believed her Scriptures to be the book of God, of which God was in such a sense the author that every one of its affirmations of whatever kind is to be esteemed as the utterance of God, of infallible truth and authority.”*

They were also committed to the _____ of God in salvation.

- That sinful men are saved...are justified by God’s grace through faith, apart from works
 - Just as the Bible says
- That the work of God in salvation also includes the finished work of Jesus Christ
 - Not only in His death
 - But also, in His resurrection
 - You see, just like the Colossians church experienced in the first century, when the Word of God is questioned, God Himself is questioned
 - They fought for the truth of the Deity of Christ
- So, we also agree with the words of B.B. Warfield who wrote about our acceptance before God.
 - *“We have but one Savior; and that one Savior is Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing that we are and nothing that we can do enters in the slightest measure into the ground of our acceptance with God. Jesus did it all.”*

The third thing these men were committed to, was that God alone is to be _____.

- The Triune God worshiped in spirit and in truth. Truth meaning the Scriptures and not our feelings about life and things and our experiences.

- Since the resurrection and the Deity of Christ were always under attack in the abandonment of the truth, Warfield wrote:
 - *“Had Christ not risen we could not believe Him to be what He declared Himself when He ‘made Himself equal with God.’ But He has risen in the confirmation of all His claims. By it alone, but by it thoroughly, is He manifested as the very Son of God, who has come into the world to reconcile the world to Himself. It is the fundamental fact in the Christian’s unwavering confidence in ‘all the words of this life.’”*

These people would ultimately become known as “_____.”

Now, a person labeled a fundamentalist COULD be a crazy person, who also has strayed from Biblical truth, but that is not what this started out as. This was a group of people who were Bible-believing Christians.

The rise of fundamentalism was the counter to the theological liberalism that had taken root and flourished in the churches. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this group would include men like Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), C.I. Scofield (1843-1921), and Billy Sunday (1882-1935).

- These men were well-known evangelists in their day

The fundamentalist movement would include different Bible conferences and groups who would create official statements or creeds, doing what the church has always tried to do with creeds. To clarify, safeguard, and take a stand on Biblical principles and doctrines.

- They would have to, because of the major influence of the liberalism infiltrating the church’s teaching and practice
- One such statement was made by the Presbyterians in 1910

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church decided on “five fundamentals” that is... fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

1. The inerrancy of Scripture
2. The virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ
3. The substitutionary atonement of Christ’s death
4. The bodily resurrection of Christ
5. The authenticity of Christ’s miracles

Also in 1910, a Presbyterian man named Lyman Stewart put up the funds for publishing what was called “The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth.”

- This included 90 writings and essays from over 60 authors from different denominations
- These were put out from 1910 to 1915
- These were expansions on the 5 fundamentals above
- These sought to help fight against the skeptical attacks on Scripture

Example: *“The living Word shall continue to be the discerning companion of all who resort to it for the help which is not to be had elsewhere in this world of the dying. In going to the Bible, we never think of ourselves as going back to a book of the distant past, to a thing of antiquity; but we go to it as to a book of the present...a living book. And so indeed it is, living in the power of an endless life, and able to build us up and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.”*

The people who held to these fundamentals were first called “Fundamentalists” in 1920 when **Curtis Lee** wrote about them in a publication and said, *“We suggest that those who still cling to the great fundamentals and who mean to do battle royal for the fundamentals shall be called ‘Fundamentalists’”*

Question: Should we in the church fight for the church to stick to fundamental Biblical doctrine?

- The answer is YES!
- Not physical fighting but fighting of lies with the Truth.

This wasn’t the first time, as we have seen, and it won’t be the last time the church needs to stand on the truth of God’s word in the face of opposition, skepticism, doubt, and attacks.

A particular battle over this was called the “Fundamentalist-Modernist” controversy

- This took place in the early 1900s among what were mainline American denominations
- What was going on in these denominations was an ideological battle between the Bible believing Christians and the theological liberals

Again, this was hard fought especially in the Presbyterian churches. Some of their seminary professors had denied the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy and were removed from their teaching positions.

In 1922, a liberal Baptist minister preached a sermon at First Presbyterian Church New York, titled “Shall the Fundamentalists Win? Of course, he said they should not.

In 1936, J. Gresham Machen left the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) to establish the (OPC) Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

- Machen had been a professor at Princeton Seminary, but it drifted toward liberalism, so he left

As the public embraced modernism more and more, there were other events that took place in different states that began to also turn public opinion against those who were known as fundamentalists.

- 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial

- Substitute high school biology teacher, John Scopes, went on trial after violating Tennessee law by teaching the theory of evolution in a public school

Three-time presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan, prosecuted the case

- Scopes was found guilty, but the trial brought a lot of attention to what the public viewed as fundamentalist-creationist views that were out of touch with all the supposed progress science had made.

This and other things served to turn American opinion in a negative direction against Christianity

- Major denominations were split as fundamentalists left and started more conservative denominations

By the 1940s there came about what has been called “new evangelicalism.” This was a group of Bible believing Christians who thought that the fundamentalists were becoming known for infighting and also for anti-intellectualism.

- They would eventually just be called “_____.”
- 1942, the National Association of Evangelicals was established

One way they differed was that they sought to tone down their communication and be more friendly. Of course, one of the most popular and well-known evangelicals ever, was a preacher named _____ who came about in the 1950s and 60s.

Billy Graham was raised in fundamentalist circles, but he would be known for partnering with theological liberals and Roman Catholics in his evangelistic crusades. This ruffled the feathers of the fundamentalists, but many American evangelicals saw Billy Graham as the spokesman for the whole movement.

Evangelicals would increasingly become involved with American politics in the 1970s and 80s. The church is still seen today, and in many cases it is true, as being very tied to political parties.

The fact is most Christian denominations have again drifted away from the Bible.

- We must recognize and learn from Church history that drifting from, or abandoning the Bible as authoritative in the life of the Church is deadly
- It is the on again/off again pattern of Christians and churches to drift when they do not preach and teach the Word of God as truth for life.
- Biblical fidelity is key

We must remain faithful and continue to contend, in our day, for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

- It is not unloving to fight for truth over lies, It is the most loving thing we can do for one another
- If scripture changes based on culture or feelings or experiences...then we cannot trust it at all.

Psalm 119:160 *“The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.”*