

A Rebuttal of 12 Anti-Separatist Arguments Used to Promote Ecumenical Practices and Compromise with Local Churches

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The Scriptures are very clear about the matter of separation from all unbelief and apostasy. There is no question in God's mind about Biblical separation from unbelievers who promote religious error in the context of liberal churches and ecumenical rallies that unite with unbelievers of rank religious denominations. Ecclesiastical separation is clearly taught in the Scriptures. Only a person with New Evangelical eyeglasses will miss God's clear command.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

The Corinthians were specifically told to never yoke together or maintain close religious ties with those temple services and places where the religious unbelief of idolatry (“the unclean thing”) was practiced and where unbelievers representing this idolatry were present. The reasons given for such a radical separation are spelled out in a series of contrasts. Righteousness and unrighteousness do not mix. Light and darkness are not compatible. Christ cannot agree with the devil (Belial). The saved believer cannot fellowship with the unbeliever in a religious setting since he rejects the Savior and refuses to see his need for salvation.

They operate in two different spiritual realms. Furthermore, God dwells within the body of believers in the person of the Holy Spirit and has no agreement or joint participation with those pagan places, which promote idolatry and religious apostasy. Paul said that in visiting these places which

promote heresy makes the believer to fellowship with the unclean practices of idolatry or false religion and the very demons behind the idolatry or false religion which normally takes place in that setting.

1 Corinthians 10:20 gives the temple settings where these religious services occurred. And what does Paul say? “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.”

There is a definite command and plea to separate ourselves from unbelief as it is practiced in religious settings and from those who represent unbelieving practices in religious meetings. The principle is very clear to understand. By way of application, we are not to unite with the religious unbelief going on today in liberal churches where unbelief is practiced and promoted. Likewise, we must separate from ecumenical rallies where unbelievers come to represent their religious denominational structures which practice unbelief, and which are apostate in structure. To ignore the command for separation and join together with all Protestant faiths actually unites us with their liberal and apostate belief systems, which demons are behind. Our presence sends a message that we are in agreement with their doctrinal departure and the Bible says that we become a participant in their false belief system.

2 John 1:10-11

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

We should never attend those rallies where denominational structures cooperate together for religious and political endeavors and by so doing endorse the unbelief (“evil deeds”) in those apostate denominational systems. Our presence causes us to become yoked together with unbelievers in their unbelief and sends our endorsement upon their apostate denominations and their modernism, which they represent. Our cooperation sends our own endorsement upon their wicked apostasy even if there are believers present and part of the apostate system.

Ephesians 5:7 says:

“Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

The Bible teaches that we should not associate ourselves with a church or religious ecumenical service where known apostate liberals and unbelievers are invited for some common good and where my presence sends the message that I am fellowshiping with them in some religious or social endeavor. This unequal tie of fellowship makes me a partaker with their false systems and also sends the message that I am accepting, promoting and condoning their system of error and apostasy from the truth. Therefore, we should not attend an ecumenical rally where there is the joining or banding together of a hodgepodge of religious faiths where unbelievers represent apostate denominational systems and where they are invited to participate with us for some particular cause or purpose.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 says:

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

The Bible tells us to prove (discern or examine) all things and not to silently promote the heresies of Roman Catholics and liberal Protestantism by uniting with them in religious endeavors. The principle behind Ephesians 5:11 tells us to correct and not condone religious error. It says: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Many New Evangelical believers are saying today that we can unite with all churches whenever the Gospel is preached and whenever people have the opportunity to get saved. Their one note banjo is playing the same familiar tune of ecumenical or interdenominational cooperation with all faiths and churches in spite of doctrinal differences. As long as the Gospel is upheld or the ecumenical rally promotes some national good such as anti-abortion rallies, family values or political preaching, then there is nothing wrong uniting with all beliefs.

This ecumenical theory also says that the Bible never shows believers separating from churches where the Gospel is preached. They claim that

Christians are never told to separate from other Christians but are to unite with them for the common good of the Gospel and the expansion of Christianity. In addition, we are told today that we must become lovingly understanding and accepting of different faiths, even the anti-Protestant system of Roman Catholicism, which is responsible for the deaths of millions of people in the Inquisition. We are told that we should be able to unite together for the common good, whatever that good might be. The “end justifies the means” and we can be sure that the end is always good when different faiths join together and put down their doctrinal differences for some common good.

New Evangelicals will also sight many proposed verses and arguments that seemingly support their ecumenical practices with rank denominationalism and their doctrinal departures. It’s these arguments that I want to refute in this study and by doing so seek to uphold the historic teaching of separation as taught by the apostles and which is supported from the Bible.

1. There is the argument that revolves around the churches of Asia Minor.

For instance, John says in Revelation 3:2:

“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

New Evangelicals are quick to point out that six of the other churches are warned about their dreadful problems but never are the believers told to separate from the church or break away from the nucleus of believers that represent that church in a given locality (Rev. 2:9-10; 15-17; 20-21 with 24-26; 3:2). This seems to give the New Evangelicals the mandate to remain supportive and tied to their own apostate churches and denominations, which have long apostatized in their doctrinal convictions. It also gives these New Evangelical piranhas some meat to feed upon when it comes to remaining in a church where the Gospel is preached even when there is other faulty doctrine and very questionable worldly practices going on. They also like to use this reference to promote ecumenical gatherings where denominational structures are represented that might not agree with them on Gospel issues and doctrinal truth. “After all,” they say, “We can always strengthen those things that are good and still remain.”

Years ago, when I was just a teen, I asked if one of my friends would baby-sit my pet piranha. So, while he was gone at football practice I went over to his house and put this piranha in his fish tank. When he came home he informed me that my piranha went on an eating binge and ate his other fish. I was surprised since my piranha was not that big. Nevertheless, one fish was half eaten and floating at the top of the fish tank!

Well, the New Evangelicals are like feeding piranhas when it comes to trying to find and use certain texts in Scripture to promote their doctrine of infiltration and acceptance of worldly methods in a church. Their mentality is to remain in the organization and church and try to strengthen what is still good. Their claim is that there are problems in every church and we are never told to separate from other brethren or any church just because things are going bad. They also claim that we can gather together with other denominations and try to promote the good that are in them.

These alleged verses dealing with the churches of Asia Minor are used by modern New Evangelicalism to promote a non-separated position. In response to this we must say that these verses cannot be used to override God's clear commands to separate from unbelievers in religious settings (2 Cor. 6:14-17; Romans 16:17; 1 Cor. 10:21) and judge false teachers (Matt. 7:6; Acts 20:28). Nor can they be used as a scapegoat to teach that brethren should never separate from one another (2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Cor. 5:11) or prove all the things that we hear (1 Thess. 5:21). In addition, we must remember that the believer must always surrender to God and obey God rather than remaining with other believers in a compromising position (Romans 12:1-2). The believer is always obligated to do the will of God which will eventually lead to separation from a church, which has become corrupted.

We must also remember that God warns these Christians in the churches to repent, and He also promises to judge those in the assemblies who were not walking according to right doctrine or right living (see Revelation 2:5,11,16, 22; 3:2). New Evangelical eyeglasses always conveniently miss this. It certainly is not prevalent among New Evangelical ministries to hear about preachers telling their congregations to repent of many of their

worldly ways and compromises with apostasy. Certainly this is not happening in New Evangelical ministries today. They are not obeying what Christ is asking these churches to do. Therefore, they only want to use this particular church example to a certain point to condone their own worldly compromise but deny the content of the rest as it applies to their lives of compromise with apostasy and worldly amusements and their need to repent. This is called huckstering the Word of God for your own intentions and you can be sure that there is a lot of this going on today.

The point is also made in these letters to the churches that God is not happy with the situations at hand and will not allow it to continue on with His blessing and favor (Rev. 2:20-21). This is also something that is left undone in New Evangelical churches. They don't want to face the reality of what is going on in the areas of compromise among their people when it comes to rock music, ecumenicalism, and all sorts of worldly compromise. They would rather sidestep the entire worldliness issue and those carnal sins being committed in the lives of many people in their congregations. They surely don't want to hear that God may have something against them (Rev. 2:4, 14, 20). So once again they use the command to remain in a particular church without applying the need to look at the very church they are in and correct what is wrong.

The church of Pergamos was much like the New-Evangelical church and movement which is in the world today. Maybe that is why they like to compare themselves to these churches in Asia Minor! The Church of Pergamos is clearly identified with the same mindset and spirit of New-Evangelicalism. The Christians at Pergamos had been true to God under severe testing (Rev. 2:13) but had compromised their testimony in other ways, as seen in verses 14-15. They stood for the name of Christ, which may refer to holding the line on the deity of Christ ("thou holdest fast my name" – vs. 13). Likewise, these Christians did not deny the great fundamentals of the faith ("And hast not denied my faith" – vs. 13). This may refer to the body of true doctrine, which is believed by Christians.

New Evangelicalism today is like this church in many ways. They talk about holding to the fundamental doctrines but at the same time they are willing to be part of questionable practices that do not promote the doctrine of

separation and holiness. They are tolerant toward sin and error and therefore compromise their testimony. This is what Jesus spoke to this church about. There were those in their midst who held to the doctrine or teaching of Balaam. You will remember that Balaam taught Balac the way to corrupt Israel by intermarriage with the Moabite women (vs. 14). This introduced into the nation of Israel both idolatry and spiritual fornication.

The point seems to be this. New Evangelicals will use these verses dealing with the churches in Asia Minor only so far. They will use them to promote their own specialized endorsement of fellowshipping with denominational churches who do not necessarily square up with the Gospel or God's truth. But they will not heed the other warnings about corruption with the enemy or the biblical teaching about worldliness in the churches. In doing this they become one-sided and neglect to correct those people within their own local church settings like Christ did to these various churches. Therefore, they use these church examples to promote the theory to remain in a certain organization or denomination that is corrupt in order to try and strengthen the good that still remains (Rev. 3:2). However, they fail to outwardly correct the great apostasy and worldliness occurring in that local church. This is obviously foreign to these accounts in the book of Revelation as we see Christ chiding them for the problems within the local church assemblies.

The church of Pergamos also had those within their ranks who were promoting the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (Rev. 2:15). The word actually means "to conquer the people." This was the teaching that there should be a system of priestly order over the people whereby men could lead the people into whatever practices they decided to promote. It was believed that this was actually a Gnostic teaching that involved license to sin since believers were said to be under grace. In any case, these believers allowed this pagan society to get into their church. Christ says that He hates it! You see, Christ hates as well as loves. The New-Evangelical Christians many times are not willing to talk about God hating something within their churches or the parameters of their ecumenical fellowships!

The Lord also adds in this setting of the local churches that a churches light or testimony in the community can be snuffed out for not loving God and

following His will. In essence, God was saying to stop all of this error and compromise or else I will come into your ministry and put out your light or testimony (Rev. 2:5). This means that God in His way of thinking can consider a church to be dead and nonexistent. John was simply telling the believers to hang on to what they had in those local churches until God sends His disciplinary judgment upon them or either snuffs out their light of testimony altogether.

We must also remember that Christ is giving instruction on a local church level and not some gigantic ecclesiastical level which the church has developed into today. Paul is dealing with a group of Christians who are already in a localized church setting who sadly find their churches going sour. He is not dealing with an ecclesiastical organized body of churches known for doctrinal corruption and the acceptance and promotion of worldly methods. The same was true in the case of the localized Corinthian church. Paul corrected the carnality of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:1-3) but did not advise separation from this carnal church. This is because the church began well (1 Cor. 1:4-7) but eventually started to go downhill as carnality set into their midst.

It is important to realize that Paul was trying to correct the Corinthian carnality on a local level and not an organized ecclesiastical level. Many will use the argument that Paul did not tell people to separate from the Corinthian church. They claim that this gives them the right to go into those carnal Christian ministries of today that are questionable in worldly practice and shallow in doctrinal teaching. Therefore, they have no problem attending a church, which may be promoting the music of the world system and ecumenicalism, so long as they can at least share the Gospel and try to encourage the saints in a certain given locality. It sounds so noble to do this, but we must remember that neither Jesus nor Paul was dealing with an established organization of churches that represent wrong teaching and practice wrong practices. They were dealing with local church settings that had gone bad.

We must look at the situation in that day as compared to our own day and time. The local churches of today have progressed or should we say retrogressed into an ecclesiastical nightmare where large bodies of

churches are represented by organizations which endorse apostasy and error. This massive departure (2 Thess. 2:3) called for some drastic actions on the part of historic and present-day separatists. It was needful to separate from this mammoth departure from the faith in order to preserve the truth. So do not confuse the local level instruction with the organizational level. It is true that the local level of the church represents the whole living organism of the church. But the local churches do not have to necessarily represent the organized religious rebellion on the institutional level.

It's also true that we can remain in a church on a local level that is experiencing problems which does not represent apostasy on a large organizational level if we are honestly attempting to speak out and initially fix those problems. For instance, we may be attending a non-denomination church that was originally established with good standards but then begins to accept the world's standards in their worship and methodology. We would naturally out of love for the foundation of the local ministry remain in the church for some time and attempt to hold fast to those things that are still good. Therefore, out of a heart to see improvement you would initially obey what our Lord said.

Revelation 3:2 again states:

“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

I have met many Christians like this over the years that were charter members of good Bible believing separated churches who took a stand against worldliness. But over the years a subtle deterioration set in to these particular churches and ministries. Out of love for the local ministry in a given locality they attempted to stand strong within the church and hold fast to those things which were still good. They stood for truth, fought for what was right and tried to correct the problems as Scripture tells us to do. But in time they began to see their beloved church crumble and could only watch in horror as it fell to full-blown New Evangelicalism. Therefore, they needed to look elsewhere for directions and see what God's Word also said about separation from a local body of believers who did not change their ways.

Ephesians 5:11 once again clearly says:

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

The directives given to the local churches in Asia Minor are only half the story. If the worldly or doctrinal situation cannot be mended and the local church restored to health then we are commanded to separate from this church on the grounds of unequal yoke with unbelievers who are being permitted to participate with the local church in ecumenical practices (2 Cor. 6:14), on the grounds of the endorsement of evil in the church (1 Cor. 10:20), disorderly conduct among brethren (2 Thess. 3:6), abstaining from the appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:21) and refusing fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11).

In general, anti-separatists use the churches of Asia Minor to teach that we should remain in local churches even when they are not doctrinally perfect and corrupt in some of their practices. But they fail to see that God reveals His sore displeasure with their compromises and shortcomings and in some cases promises to judge them for their lack of repentance (Rev. 2:5; 3:19). Christ’s instructions to these churches does not reveal God’s entire mind on the Biblical subject of separation from apostasy and worldliness. But the point of Jesus is this: “Fix what is wrong!” We know from other Scripture that if something cannot be corrected (Eph. 5:11) we need to separate from the disorderly brethren (2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15) to stop the spread of sin (1 Cor. 5:7), maintain ethical integrity, and properly represent God’s holiness and glory (1 Cor. 10:31). Furthermore, God’s mind is very clear on the error of uniting together with unbelievers in religious endeavors – “come out” (2 Cor. 6:17).

The churches in Asia Minor only deal with the need to correct problems on a local church level but not the need to separate from a growing generic religious apostasy that is organized against the truth. The Lord deals with the local church level and the need to remain in the assembly that has gone bad and correct that which is wrong over a period of time. However, the rest of God’s Word equally informs us that when we cannot make corrections then we must spit on the ground and free ourselves from what

is going on in that church and separate from the darkness that we could not reprove (Eph. 5:11).

It is simply ridiculous to try and use these Scriptures as prooftexts to justify your actions of taking part in some denominational organized church today (or any church) that does not preach the truth clearly, which lacks in its teaching of sound doctrine, and which promotes worldly practices and even false doctrine. Many have developed the view that you can share the Gospel and attempt to make changes in a ministry that has been firmly entrenched in unbiblical patterns and which has digressed into dead formalism or extra-scriptural antics. However, this is not what the Bible endorses. If this is what the Bible really teaches, then we could all go into the local liberal church and just sit there and see if we can bring some light to the darkness. But God says we must come out (2 Cor. 6:17) and He also says that their light has gone out and cannot be turned back on (Rev. 2:5).

If God is saying that we can attend any established church, then we could throw out everything that God has ever said about separation, and all go down to the local charismatic church and laugh in the Holy Spirit and pray that we might get our teeth filled with glory gold dust! Or we could all attend the New Evangelical church which says that we are free to watch R-rated movies and smoke a few cigarettes now and then or drink a few social drinks and dance at the nightclubs of the world. We could attend that church which endorses ecumenical practices with the heresies of Roman Catholics and liberal Protestantism.

These types of ministries have already gone over the waterfall, and they are beyond return and even reproof for that matter. Therefore, when you enter these types of ministries and begin to associate with them and attend or participate in their services, it makes you guilty of endorsing either their denominational distinctives or compromising brand of New Evangelicalism.

By knowingly going into an already established church ministry that has its tentacles interwoven around liberalism or New Evangelicalism makes you a promoter and partaker of their false teaching or worldly practices in the sense that you fellowship with what is normally condoned, promoted or left undone in that assembly (Eph. 5:7,11; 1 Timothy 5:22). By way of

principle, you also fellowship with the unrighteousness, darkness and even demonism that is entrenched in these ministries instead of separating from it (2 Cor.6:14; 1 Cor. 10:20).

Furthermore, when entering into an already established denominational church that knowingly promotes carnality, and which does not clearly preach against sin, you only endorse that denominational church structure and all that it stands for as a organized body. This is true of any church that lacks sound teaching and sound practice. You endorse what goes on in that given local church by your presence and become a joint partaker or participant of what goes on in that assembly. Furthermore, you also stain your testimony which should be one of uncompromising allegiance to truth and the desire to steer away from those established atmospheres of corrupt denominational teachings and New Evangelical practices in many churches dotted across our land.

If Paul were here today, he would in no wise put up with such worldly measures and all the compromises taking place within the churches. Furthermore, there is no hope for most New Evangelical ministries when it comes to reverting to the old faith as it relates to the doctrine of separation. New Evangelical ministries have deep roots in worldly compromise today and do not want to be reprovved for their compromise and unfruitful works of darkness with the enemy. They want to stay on the ecumenical express and keep moving down the tracks of worldly compromise. Therefore, there is only one thing that we can do to remain pure and holy and separate from such continued compromise. We must separate from the brethren who continue to walk disorderly and who want to follow the drift of the times.

You can be sure that Paul would not put up with such terrible compromise today within the church. He would call for a withdrawal from such brethren even as he did in 2 Thessalonians 3:6. In 1 Corinthians 5:11 Paul also warned about a brother going back into covetousness or the idolatry that he had been saved out of and said that the church had to separate from such worldly members. There was no getting around it. Furthermore, today we have churches promoting Satan's end-time music and pushing his program to build the harlot church of Revelation chapter seventeen.

These evil atrocities should not be condoned among the brethren and necessitate a withdrawal of fellowship so purity and decency can abound in the meetings of the Lord. The principle taught in the Bible says that we must flee these types of things and not participate with them in any measure (1 Timothy 6:11). If we are told to not condone sin but reprove it and we can't make any changes, then there is only one alternative to the situation - separation. We must flee those places and ministries that are compromising with the system so that we can out of obedience flee those worldly things that soil our holy lives and keep us from having a good testimony for the Lord.

We must once again remember that both Christ to the seven churches and Paul to the Corinthians were dealing with a local situation in various churches that had gone bad. They were not dealing with the issue of brethren entering into large ecclesiastical bodies of churches that represent apostasy and rebellion against God's holy standards of separation. They dealt with the issue of believers remaining in a local church and trying to correct the problems that have invaded a particular church that was once good but had gone sour. And ample warning is also given to fix the problems or else!

Here is the point. Neither Christ nor Paul were endorsing the fellowshipping with large ecclesiastical bodies of churches that were already deep-seated in denominational corruption and which represent a common bond in their endorsement of false doctrine and worldly practices that are against God's standard of separation and holiness. In other words, these commands to remain in various churches and fix problems are given to those believers who were no doubt foundational to the local ministry and who alone could influence that ministry for change.

We used to sing a song in my elementary school days that went like this:

“There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole.”

There is an obvious hole in the bucket of New Evangelicalism today when it attempts to argue for infiltration among churches that promote apostasy or

worldliness by using the churches of Asia Minor as examples. There is a hole in their theory and it's leaking out all over the religious community. New Evangelicals go to extremes to try and make some theory stick that would seemingly override God's clear commands for separation (2 Cor. 6:17).

2. There is the argument that revolves around Jesus and Paul entering the synagogues.

Another vain argument that many are using today to promote infiltration with apostasy and those churches who promote ecumenicalism and worldliness in their midst have to do with Jesus entering the synagogues where the Pharisees taught who were unbelievers. Their non-separatist proposition and argument goes like this. The Lord regularly participated in the worship of the synagogue where the unbelieving Pharisees taught (Luke 4:16-31). Therefore, the actions of Jesus would demonstrate that it's all right to attend liberal churches and participate in ecumenical services so long as we seek to do some good.

They want to use Jesus and His practice of attending the synagogues as a way to avoid the whole issue of church or ecclesiastical separation. The fact of the matter is this. In that day, prior to the church, the synagogue was the only place of ordained worship. Therefore, Jesus was not ecumenically participating in any ecclesiastical unity of all denominations. It seems almost ludicrous to try and equate the visits of Jesus to the temple to the visits of Billy Graham or some other well-known evangelist to some Catholic College or liberal church.

The reason is because the synagogue was the only ordained place of worship before the church was established. Furthermore, Jesus did set a standard for us to follow when it comes to separation in this church age even before the church originated and it is the other side of the story that the New Evangelicals do not want to face. In their attempt to support their non-separatist spirit of compromise they miss the obvious. In looking for the needle in the haystack they forget to see the straw! It is profitable for us to note the general tenor of Christ's synagogue visits and His conduct exhibited with its synagogue leaders and worshippers.

The rulers of the synagogues developed hatred for Christ because He was bold enough to go into the synagogues and preach the truth and expose the very leaders who were full of hypocrisy. This is something that ecumenical evangelists will not do as they congregate with false teachers and ask them to lead in prayer and participate in religious services. They will not correct the errors of the people but silently endorse what liberal denominations teach and stand for as an organization. This is hardly the way Jesus presented Himself in the synagogues.

After entering the synagogue in Nazareth we see the response of the worshippers. Luke 4:28 –31 says:

“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way, And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.”

On another occasion in the Galilean synagogue Jesus was once again strong in his criticism and as a result was looked down upon and sought after to be killed.

Matthew 12:9-14 says:

And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: “And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.”

Matthew 13:54-58 also records another visit to the Nazareth synagogue: "And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Jesus was not afraid to stand up for absolute truth, condemn error and reprimand the leaders and people for false practices. His teaching offended people and brought them to the place where they wanted to kill Him. This is hardly the approach of New Evangelical evangelists today who are supportive or huge gatherings, which represent unbelievers and liberal clergymen and where they attempt to please everybody instead of warn the people against the modernistic trends in Protestantism and the satanic errors of false religion. Their idea or concept is not to offend people with secondary doctrine. Instead, they want to promote unity without correction and love without warning.

In His synagogue visit to Capernaum (John 6:59), Jesus rebuked the crowds for following Him out of carnality or for mere fleshly (physical) reasons. In this synagogue discourse Jesus clearly revealed that these people were following Him for the wrong reasons (6:26) and then preached how they needed to follow Him for spiritual reasons. He was the Bread of Life who could bring spiritual salvation into their lives (6:33). The result was that many chose to not follow Him any longer (John 6:66). When you flat out tell somebody that they are carnal and are not right in their actions, it's then that you will find that many will depart from your ministry and what nothing to do with you any longer.

In the Judean synagogue on the Sabbath Christ healed a woman and the ruler of the synagogue publicly rebuked His practice. But Jesus did not back down. In righteous anger He calls His objectors "hypocrites" and by these words he shames them before everybody.

Luke 13:14-15 says:

“And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?”

Jesus vehemently calls the religious group of the Pharisees and scribes, who were in the synagogues, hypocrites and snakes (Matt. 6:2,5; 23:6; Mark 12:39; Luke 11:43; 20:46). When did you ever hear Billy Graham call the pope a snake? Where do you hear ecumenical evangelists denouncing the heresies of Catholicism and modernism? Jesus did not play games with religious apostasy and unbelief. He did not cooperate with these modernists in religious campaigns by failing to denounce their wicked ways.

Jesus did not play footsie with them like these modern-day pied piper evangelists are doing by promising never to say anything that might be detrimental to the religious beliefs of a particular church. Jesus boldly denounced their errors and hypocrisies for what they really were. In time we see why the rulers and religious people came to hate Jesus for what He said and did in the synagogues because it went against their own set of beliefs. Therefore, they decided to ostracize any man from the local synagogue who confessed that Jesus was the Christ.

John 9:22

“These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.”

John 12:42-43

“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

We see then that the visits of Jesus to the synagogues were characterized by controversy as Christ publicly rebuked the rulers and said those things, which offended them. He was not afraid to say and do the right things right to the faces of those who despised it. It is no wonder that as Jesus entered the synagogues the people decided to forsake Him, rebuke Him and even attempt to kill Him. This can hardly be said of the modern day evangelists who ignore denominational errors and fail to denounce the liberals and denominations for their doctrinal heresies and departures from the faith.

We must conclude that the visits of Christ to the synagogue would have no bearing on the present-day matter of ecumenical evangelism and infiltration simply because it was the only place of ordained Jewish worship in that day. Furthermore, we should remember to share with the New Evangelical that when Christ ministered in the synagogues that He created controversy for standing up for what was right and denouncing the error of the religious errorists.

Jesus did not cooperate with the liberals by refusing to speak about certain things that might hurt their religious feelings. Jesus did not brush the truth under the carpet when it came to wrongdoing. The synagogue visits of Jesus did not consist of handshaking, cooperation, trust, conciliation, fellowship and approval like the ecumenical evangelism of today. Jesus did not talk like the New Evangelical Christian of today who might say, "That Episcopal Church gang really is a swell bunch when you get to know them and they really believe similar things to our own faith."

There was no such sweet talk and compromise when Jesus came to the synagogues. The visits of Jesus to the synagogues did not result in the buttering up of the enemy. They were marked with hostility, righteous indignation and rebuke. Therefore, the idea that these synagogue visits can in some way become valid arguments in favor of ecumenical evangelism and the silent acceptance of false doctrine is erroneous. There is a hole in this line of reasoning.

"There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole."

We also read about how Paul went into the synagogues and boldly preached the truth causing controversy (Acts 17:2,17). Some will argue that this took place in the church age and would justify going into liberal churches or hold ecumenical meetings with modernists so long as you can preach the Gospel and see people saved. But once again we find that this argument breaks down. We have forgotten that in the initial expansion of early Christianity there were many godly Jews who needed to be transferred from their understanding of the Old Testament law to the dispensation of grace (Acts 18:26). In fact, the church would in large be formed out of the synagogues as many Jews and Gentiles would believe on the Lord and then establish local churches that centered around the new message of Christ and the manifestation of His grace (22:19; 26:11).

Paul preached in the synagogues because the synagogues were the ordained places of worship in that day (Acts 2:46) and out of these local synagogues the local churches would actually begin to grow as people came to Christ through the preaching of Paul and the other apostles (Acts 14:1; 18:4). We must understand the unique transition period of early Christianity from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from the synagogue to the church, from law to grace and how the early church at large grew out of those people who were being saved in the synagogues. Jesus commissioned the disciples to take the Gospel to the Jews first as they went forth to preach to the world (Acts 1:8). However, in time we see that many Jews rejected the word of the Lord. As a result, the Jews and the synagogue visits would no longer be necessary as the Lord dispensationally turned to the Gentiles and the synagogues were labeled as dens of unbelief and rejection of truth (Acts 13:44-48; 18:6).

At the conclusion of these visits to the synagogue by Christ and then the apostles and as their ministries drew to a close, we find that the remaining people in these synagogues stood condemned as rejecting great light and were eventually rejected by the church. Churches sprang up and became the centers of worship in the new dispensation. The synagogues became those places that rejected great light and no longer had an important part in church life. We find that one such synagogue was actually called the synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Therefore, to use the argument that Paul went into the synagogues as a mandate to associate with rank liberal

churches today is simply ridiculous. A person simply does not have an understanding of the early expansion of Christianity in the initial stages of the foundation of the church when they seek to raise arguments like these. These arguments simply cannot hold any water in light of the ecumenical compromise of today.

“There’s a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There’s a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole.”

3. There is the argument that revolves around the disciples cooperating with willing people.

This is the argument that says Jesus told His disciples to cooperate with anybody who would have them unless they clearly rejected their message (Matt. 10:1-42; Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-16). Their argument goes like this. If Jesus told His disciples to fellowship with anyone that willingly accepts them and who are non-opponents, then this means that we can fellowship with anyone who accepts us and cooperate together with them in ecumenical gatherings for noble purposes.

Once again, we see the futility of this argument based upon the mere fact that Jesus is not addressing the subject of ecclesiastical churches but home hospitality. Furthermore, those who reject the Gospel of grace are enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18) no matter which way you cut the pie! In addition, the New Evangelical eyeglasses once again miss some important points concerning what Jesus said. Special emphasis is given by Jesus on the matter of being able to “enquire who in it (the city) is worthy” (Matt. 10:11). This means that the disciples were to search out those people and homes in a given locality who were considered to be worthy or in some measure fit.

This would indicate that some people were unworthy. What was this criterion of worthiness that Jesus was talking about? No doubt it would have to be a house that would not give offense to the townspeople by representing a bad example. This would inevitably damper the religious thrust of the disciples in the given locality. If they would enter into a house of an idolater or some charlatan who was known for cheating people in the

local town this would not only hinder the gospel message but also possibly annihilate it. The entire thrust of the disciples' program could be given a ruinous bad name in view of their wrong association. And the same is true in light of the believer's compromise with apostate Christendom who rejects salvation by grace and other great doctrines of the Bible. The disciples were not to base their headquarters at just any old place. They could not risk compromising their testimony by wrong association. Where they represented themselves could mar the reputation of the message and their Master so that it would be impossible for them to obtain a hearing in Jewry.

Matthew 10:11-13 says:

"And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you."

If the disciples were to inquire who was worthy of taking them into their home this would require some questions. It placed responsibility upon the disciples to determine what the background of a person was and the reasons why people invited them to stay with them. They could not just make peace with any person as modern ecumenicalism does today. If this process would be applied to ecumenicalism today one could readily find out why the liberals want to gather together in giant ecumenical gatherings with those who preach the Gospel.

The liberals want to have their religious agenda promoted and in return fill their own churches with converts by filtering these people back into their blind systems following these giant ecumenical gatherings. The liberals want to make a name for themselves and are attempting to fuse liberalism with conservatism so as to gain more of a liberal stance and hearing for their doctrinal views. We might also conclude that the liberals want to ultimately fill their own coffers with "cash on the barrelhead" as we say when these incoming converts or proselytes come into their churches!

Who are those people that are worthy? If Jesus warns about false prophets (Matt. 7:15) surely they would not be in the class of worthy people! They

would be in the unworthy class of people! The wolves mentioned in Matthew 10:16 would be people who are not worthy. And who are the wolves? They are said to be the false prophets (Matt. 7:15). Jesus also said, “beware of men” (Matt. 10:17) which would include those unbelievers who reject their message. In fact, all unbelievers are considered outside the unworthy class since Jesus condemns these people to judgment for rejecting the message of the gospel (Matt. 10:14-15). Not every person is “worthy” to associate yourself with as you establish a religious thrust in a given community. Jesus makes this very clear but the non-separatist wants to gloss over what Jesus said to support their own pragmatic agendas. Apparently those worthy are the very ones who accept the message and the messenger with all of their hearts.

Luke 10:8 says:

“And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.”

The word “receive” in this text has a broader meaning than merely offering room and board to a person. Dean Alford said this: “It implies a receiving into the heart and life the messenger and his message. The implications of the words of Jesus is that any one who is aware of the beliefs and convictions of the messenger of the Lord, and receives him as such a messenger, is actually receiving the Lord though not in the sense of personal salvation.”

Certainly the liberal cannot be a “worthy” person who receives the true messenger when he rejects the message of the messenger! Those who have rejected the foundations of the faith can hardly be said to receive the message of the messenger if he preaches the true Gospel clearly and represents truth. Jesus clearly says that it is simply wrong to establish yourself with unbelief as it relates to religious purposes. The argument that the New Evangelical is promoting by these passages is actually seen to be nullified and denounced by the very words of Jesus. Thus, the argument of going into a place wherever you are accepted is found to be false and full of holes.

“There’s a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There’s a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole.”

4. There is the argument that revolves around Jesus accepting the cooperation of any person who did not oppose Him.

Coupled with this last argument is a similar argument that many times is used to promote ecumenical efforts with a hodgepodge of wishy-washy church denominations. It’s the similar sounding argument that says Jesus accepted the cooperation of any who did not oppose Him. It is based upon Luke 9:49-50.

“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.”

The line of reasoning goes like this. Even though certain people do not conduct their mission in precisely the same manner that the apostles conducted their own does not matter. Since Jesus chided the apostles for rebuking those who were outside the apostolic circle, we should not rebuke the modernist and denominational differences outside our comfortable religious setting and allow for dialogue with all those who are not against us – even those who may be liberal but do not oppose us.

This line of reasoning is once again faulty. In the first place, liberals do oppose the truth of the Gospel and the great doctrines of the Bible – virgin birth, blood atonement, resurrection and Second Coming of Christ. They are enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18). The liberals are not for Christ. The fact that they act friendly toward some evangelist or other believers does not make them for Christ as this man or particular individual was that Jesus talked about. A person can show courtesy, exhibit gentle talk toward true Christians and even talk about the Bible and pray but still not be for God. Just because they aid a conservative Gospel preaching evangelist does not mean that that they are really for Christ. They may simply be there as wolves among the sheep and be trying to gain converts for their church, advance the cause of liberalism and make a name for themselves.

We must remember that many can verbalize sweet things about God but still be in the category of those who are against Christ and those who never knew Him (see Matt. 7:22-23). To put the unbelieving liberals in the category of those who do not oppose Christ is ludicrous. Therefore, the whole proposition is false. In the second place we must remember that Christ did not give the apostle permission to cooperate with this man in any religious endeavor even though his overall attitude was for Christ. This was because this particular man was not part of the apostolic band and was not completely obedient to Christ. The fact of the matter is this. The Lord had only given His power to the disciples to cast out miracles (Mark 6:7). Therefore, this man was using the name of Jesus to cast out demons without the official permission given by Jesus to do such acts. He was trying to use and possess something that God had not personally given to him.

Christ is not approving of this man's wrong ministry from the standpoint of his disobedience, but He is approving of his boldness for Christ and his desire to help others. We can learn from this incident that not everybody must follow us in order to be used of God in some measure. However, the disciples could not cooperate with this man since he had strayed from what God intended for his life by trying to use Christ's power and name to cast out demons.

On the other hand, the man was to be praised for at least being for Christ and wanting to advance the truth. This is unlike the liberals who are not for Christ but reject the Gospel and historic Christian doctrines. They want nothing to do with the historic truth of Scripture and are not for Christ as so many blindly assume today. Therefore, the comparison of this account to cooperative evangelism in an attempt to endorse fellowship with Christ rejecting liberals is inexcusable and another travesty upon God's Word!

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There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole.”

5. There is the argument that revolves around the fact that Jesus was the friend of sinners.

This additional argument says Jesus was a friend of sinners (Luke 15:1-2) and we should be a friend of sinners as well by joining up with unbelievers in ecumenical rallies who might represent apostasy as long as the Gospel is presented. We should follow the example of Jesus and be a friend of sinners. How many times have we heard this one as preachers? I call this the old “Jesus Friend of Sinners Argument.”

Am I glad that Jesus is a friend of sinners? Yes indeed! He befriended me when I was going my own way in life and wandering far from the truth in the blindness and blackness of sin and unbelief. Am I friend of sinners? I would hope to think that I am. But whether or not I participate in an ecumenical crusade or rally has no bearing whatsoever on my love for lost people. I might ask you this question, “Did Jesus ever go to a church ecumenical rally where apostasy was represented, and unbelief was passed over while liberals prayed and represented their reject religion or dead denomination?”

It’s almost incredible but it is true. The conduct of Jesus with sinners in the everyday norm of life is unjustly compared to the conduct of modern-day evangelists in supporting, aiding and endorsing liberal denominations in ecumenical gatherings. And those who openly oppose such things are said to be Pharisees of the worst sort who criticize the very evangelists who love sinners. This is exactly what the Pharisees did to Christ as He befriended sinners. Therefore, we must befriend sinners in ecumenical rallies and show them that we love them and want to help them. This argument is incredibly weak for several reasons.

First, people can love sinners and desire to see the lost saved without buying a fifty-dollar ticket for some seat in a football stadium and driving to an ecumenical gathering where heresy is represented! In fact, Jesus said that we are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15). Our witnessing is to be done in the everyday norm of life as we come in contact with people who are sinners (Acts 8:4; 1 Thess. 1:7-8). To say that people cannot be a friend of sinners merely because they don’t match up to some 21st century ecumenical criteria to become “a friend of sinners” is so erroneous and partial that I will not comment on it in any more detail.

Second, we must recall that we can love our enemies by praying for their salvation (Matt. 6:44) without compromising with them in huge ecumenical rallies. On the one hand we must love our enemies but on the other hand we are never told to compromise with them in religious endeavors and sweep truth under the carpet (Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 2 John 10-11; Gal. 1:8-9; Mat. 7:15).

Third, we must reiterate that Jesus was a friend of sinners in the everyday norm of life as He made contacts with them much like we are told to do in our everyday norm of living (1 Cor. 10:27) but He never compromised with sinners. Jesus never cooperated with the publicans, harlots or sinners in the actual work and proclamation of the Gospel.

We have already seen how Jesus chose to never cooperate with the religious Pharisees and authorities of His day for any religious agenda. In fact, Christ was a constant rebuke to them (Matt. 23:15) and a growing conflict in any public debate in the synagogue. The Lord's conduct toward sinners in the everyday norm of life cannot be compared to the contact and cooperation with religious unbelief of today. However, the Lord's stern conduct toward the Pharisees should be the conduct of faithful church leaders toward all religious apostasy, which is one of rebuke and non-participation. We might also remember that the leaders wanted Jesus to be killed because of His bold stand against them (Matt. 12:14). We must also take note that Jesus viewed the chance of religious sinners being converted as much less than the filthy street sinners of the day (Matt. 21:31) who saw no need for repentance and forgiveness (Matt. 9:12).

It is sometimes imagined that the liberals have the greatest need of the Gospel. Therefore, we must fellowship with them in order to get the Gospel to them. This certainly goes contrary to what Jesus says about the difficulty that religious self-righteous people have when it comes to entering the kingdom of God. It seems that the "greater need" is with those who see themselves as the greatest sinners and are truly willing to respond to the message of grace. In any event, the whole argument that we are not a friend of sinners because we fail to endorse religious ecumenicalism is another argument full of holes.

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6. There is the argument that revolves around Jesus not making an issue out of theological error.

New Evangelicals will also argue that Jesus did not make any issues out of theological error as He made contacts with those who were unorthodox in their doctrine and practice. Therefore, this would negate any need to press theological doctrine in ecumenical meetings that might hinder the presentation of the Gospel and cause unnecessary division. This argument tries to justify cooperation among denominations on grounds other than doctrine. But to say that Jesus was not interested in the areas of sound doctrine and conduct is nothing more than a fanciful dream. We read about the encounter Jesus had with the woman at the well. In this encounter He clearly condemns her by pointing out her immoral conduct and past sin (John 4:16-18). The Lord exposed her past and present living as a sinner. But Jesus also left her know that her own breed of Samaritan worship was all wrong and needed to be corrected. What did Jesus say?

John 4:22

“Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews”

In short, Jesus said, “You don’t know what you are doing when it comes to true and honorable worship. Your theology is all mixed up!” Jesus was not afraid to expose this woman’s conduct or her false style of Samaritan worship, which centered upon a rejection of the established worship of Judaism. In the evangelistic efforts of Jesus, we see how He clearly exposed this woman’s sinfulness and her false doctrine by telling her that she was worshipping at a wrong place and in a wrong way that was not ordained by God. Our Lord was not afraid to expose her theological ignorance and error even as He was presenting the saving Gospel to her by comparing eternal life to a well of water that would never run dry and continually satisfy the drinker.

One man told me that I should never speak out against Roman Catholic errors since a Roman Catholic may be visiting in the congregation and become offended and not get saved. This surely is faulty reasoning in light of what Jesus said and did while speaking to this woman. He exposed her error while presenting the truth to her. Exposing error is the gateway to bringing people to see the truth more clearly. It helps them to see how their false systems do not square with the truth of the Word of God. Christ was very concerned about conduct and theology even as He presented the Gospel message. To say that God did not enquire about conduct or doctrine among those people to whom He ministered is simply not true. You will remember that Jesus clearly condemned false doctrine and theological ignorance among the false religious groups such as the Sadducees and Pharisees. He never brushed doctrine under the carpet as He gathered with these liberal and worldly groups of religionists.

Matthew 22:23-33

“The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.”

Jesus did not overlook the error of the Sadducees who taught that there was no resurrection. He did not declare that everyone has their own particular view on the doctrine of resurrection and then merely proceed to announce his own personal view after paying respect to the Sadducean scholarship. Jesus did not endorse error and false doctrine in any way nor

avoid it. Nor did Jesus give the truth out in a “positive way” without declaring that his opponents have erred. The words of Jesus are sure and strong – “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures...”

Jesus was not concerned about hurting the feelings of false teachers or avoiding doctrinal issues. Jesus always corrected error and denounced all heretics. Jesus never joined together with false teachers in ecumenical religious rallies where He would attempt to hide their unbelieving systems and look as though He was meshing together with them doctrinally.

It is also noteworthy to consider that when Jesus entered the temple at the beginning and close of His ministry that he cleaned house! Both John 2:13-17 and Matthew 21:12-13 tell us that Jesus did not condone what was going on in the temple and sought to condemn the unjust practices. If the Lord’s general practice was to avoid confrontation and error and speak in a “positive vein” then He would have never taken action like He did when going through the temple. But Jesus attacked both the error and the errorists in the temple exposing their wickedness. He dealt with all wrongdoing and impurity (Matt. 21:13). As we have now seen, Christ’s visits to both the synagogues and temple in His day always revealed that He dealt with error in a clear and condemning fashion. Jesus never overlooked error but brought error out into the light and exposed it for what it was.

The notion that our ministry today must be “constructive” by refusing to denounce theological error and sin and not warn against Christ-rejecting false teachers is simply erroneous. Christ denounced wrong doctrine, false teachers and sin with righteous anger, scorn and indignation. The teaching of Christ was not always “constructive” if you view constructive preaching as never denouncing apostasy and error. On the other hand, when the saints are warned about wrong doctrine and wrong teachers then teaching can in fact really be constructive and helpful in that it saves people from theological error and compromise. It may even save people from hell! That is positive preaching!

People have asked me if I am a positive preacher. I always say to them “Yes, I am a positive preacher.” Does that surprise you? I tell them that I am positive in my preaching because warning people about error that will lead

them in a wrong direction in life and cause their understanding of Scripture to be blurred and even save the lost from hell is all positive in my book! You see, it just depends on how you define what constructive preaching really is. If you use the New Evangelical Dictionary, then constructive preaching means that you must never speak out against certain denominational doctrines that are wrong or expose the theological errors of liberal Protestantism. But if you use our Lord's dictionary on positive preaching then you will discover that being positive involves condemning error and heretics so that the sheep are not devoured by them and so the poor common lost folk can be spared from deception and the damnation of hell itself. It seems that scriptural separation is positive and not negative if it is viewed from the standpoint of the Word of God.

Matthew 16:1-6 also says:

"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed. And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

In Matthew 16:11-12 Jesus concludes by saying:

"How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

It's clear that Christ was never a cooperator and condoner and co-worker with any of the false religious systems of His day. Jesus always condemned the Sadducees, Pharisees and Herodians for their wrong emphasis on doctrine and teaching (Matt. 22:15-22). He always corrected their error so

that the common folks would be on their guard and not be led astray by their false doctrines. To say that Jesus was not concerned about theological error is a totally unwarranted and unfounded statement that cannot be supported by the Biblical records.

As we have already examined, Christ continually and openly rebuked the Pharisees for their formalistic dead legalism and their sinful ways. Denouncing evil and wrong doctrine always marked the earthly ministry of Christ. The strongest words ever uttered in the Bible were against the scribes and Pharisees who were the religious leaders of the day (see Matt. 23:1-36). In this red hot temple sermon (24:1) Jesus addressed the damnable practices of these religious groups and told the common folks that these religious leaders were wrong in what they taught concerning legalism and that they were sending people into hell (23:13-16). He calls them hypocrites because they were pretending to be super spiritual on the outside by their manmade additions to the law but in reality, they were unspiritual on the inside (27-28). They were also hypocrites for not teaching primary truth that the law centered upon (23).

This is much like the liberals of our own day and time who fail to teach the important doctrines of the Bible that center around Christ – who He was and what He accomplished for us. Jesus also calls these religious deceivers hypocrites because they were claiming to prepare people for heaven when they themselves were going to hell (13-14). The religious imposters were also hypocrites for claiming that they would not have killed the prophets of old if they were living in that day. But Jesus reminds them that they were the children of those very prophets that have murdered the prophets of old (29-32). In fact, Jesus says that they were children of hell (vs. 15)!

Jesus also condemned these religious leaders for their false outward show of religious trappings which were nothing more than religious showmanship (1-7). He also calls them blind fools and blind guides no less than five times (23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26). Jesus also calls them a bunch of snakes or vipers that could not escape the damnation of hell (vs. 33)! He told the self-righteous teachers that the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of God before them (Matt. 12:14). And you think that the Lord did not deal with sin, religious error and make theology a cornerstone

of His ministry! I beg to differ with your own blind ignorance. Open your eyes and see what Jesus said and did to all religious unbelief. How utterly blind can a New Evangelical be who misses the clarity of what Jesus did to false religious systems and how He dealt with all error.

If Christians were to practice being like the Lord Jesus, they would be ready and willing to possess the same rebuking attitude that Jesus displayed toward Christ-rejecting false teachers and their errors (2 Tim. 4:2). We actually become unlike Jesus when we fail to correct error and apostasy and begin to promote and sanction these types of things in our meetings and churches. We become unlike Jesus when we accommodate false teachers and butter up to known apostates. And in cooperating with such enemies of Christ in ecumenical gatherings we actually approve, sanction, endorse, aid and cooperate with their disobedience and their rejection of the Gospel when declaring silence. In short, we become disobedient to the example that Jesus gave to us concerning living and as a result become unlike Him.

Many New Evangelicals stress that we are to fellowship together and that the Bible stresses fellowship. But like any truth or truism, it can become abused and go far beyond the intended parameters that God intended it to have. This is because the Bible clearly warns about wrong fellowships and wrong ties with those who deny the truth (1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Eph. 5:6-7).

We might also add that the New Evangelical idea, which says Jesus corrected error by trying to avoid it, is so absurd that one must wonder how these pathetic arguments ever surfaced in light of the actions of Jesus. Jesus never promoted wrong doctrine and brushed it under the carpet as He made contact with religious unbelief in the synagogues or temple. He always openly criticized and condemned it for what it was and warned the common people of the error of false teachers. The word “woe” speaks of announcing judgment upon somebody and Jesus uses this word eight times in Matthew chapter twenty-three alone (23:13,14,15,16,23,25,27,29).

The word “woe” displays the very opposite of one who ignores error! And the real hypocrisy that Jesus condemned was the pious-looking religious

playacting teachers who claimed to be spiritual but in reality were sending people straight to hell by their utter rejection and failure to preach grace to their listeners. As a result, these pious looking hypocrites were responsible for destroying multitudes of souls in hell forever. This is the greatest hypocrisy of all! I cannot think of any greater hypocrisy than this!

Claiming to be a man of God but in reality, you are a man of Satan sending people to hell. If hypocrisy is to be condemned, then let the hypocrisy of modern day religious pretenders be condemned as the worst brand of hypocrisy since they are leading people into damnation and hell fire by their false claims to be spiritual leaders when in return they are imposters. The worst offenders of hypocrisy are the modern-day liberals who are promoting error while leading people to a Christless eternity.

To say that Jesus made little about theological error is so naive that one must wonder if some New Evangelicals have cut the earthly ministry of the Lord out of the pages of their Bibles! In Matthew 5:20 Jesus warns against the false righteousness of the religious groups that plagued the people in that day. He openly condemns them and exposes them for their incorrect view on salvation. In Matthew chapters six and seven he corrects the errors of religious rabbis by directly exposing their wrong practices and wrong doctrine in an effort to save the little lambs from the fangs of the unbelieving hypocrites who would lead them astray (6:16; 7:1-6, 15-23). To say that Jesus downplayed doctrine for the sake of unity is absurd and unfounded in every way when one looks at the ministry of Jesus. Jesus never gave His approval or sanction of error. To say the least, there is a hole in this line of reasoning.

“There’s a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There’s a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole.”

7. There is the argument that revolves around the idea that Jesus was not concerned about sponsorship.

Then too, there is the argument that Jesus was never concerned about who would sponsor Him or associate with him in His earthly ministry. This argument is used to promote the false ecumenical unity with liberal

sponsors who are seeking to promote ecumenical gatherings by being on sponsoring committees, where their presence is unanimously welcomed, condoned and where their presence is even defended. They are also given opportunities to pray and participate in various preparation phases leading up to the ecumenical campaign. Finally, they are then given the opportunity to participate in prayer and other various ways in the actual meetings. They are given the right to lead people back into their churches, which are full of error and even a false gospel. Certainly our Lord did not promote such intermingling with error and acceptance of wolves among the people. Jesus was concerned about sponsorship. He just was not concerned about the earthly liberal sponsorship like the New Evangelicals are today. He was concerned about heavenly sponsorship in all that He did.

John 8:28-29

“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”

Jesus was concerned about His ultimate sponsor who was the heavenly Father. He wanted to please Him instead of the liberal who wants people to speak favorably of him and his ministry in public. Jesus wanted to please the Father instead of allowing a liberal to take part in an ecumenical service through prayer, financial assistance or singing. He wanted to please the Father instead of allowing a liberal Baal prophet to pray alongside Him and endorse His life and ministry. He wanted to please the Father instead of allowing the poor common people to walk back into a soul damning liberal church. When it came to liberal sponsorship the Lord was not concerned in the least bit. By this I mean that He wanted nothing to do with such a crowd as this when it came to doing God’s work. But we already know that He was very concerned with those who He endorsed and cooperated with during His earthly ministry. Jesus was not neutral when it came to those He associated or cooperated with and diligently taught.

The real questions surrounding this idea of modern sponsorship and the ministry of Jesus are these.

- Was Christ unconcerned over the parties with whom He cooperated, fellowshiped or gave approval?
- Was He unconcerned over the parties to whom He entrusted the care of His flock?
- Did He or would Jesus ever make an agreement not to rebuke false teachers if they sponsored Him in a religious endeavor?

The answers to all these questions have already been dealt with in the previous portions of Scriptures. We know that Jesus never cooperated with unbelief in any form as He did the works of His Father. All of the actions of Jesus prove that He was very concerned with those whom He associated with as He practiced God's will and spread the truth of God' Word. Of course, there are those who will inevitably bring up Judas as an example of one who Jesus associated with and allowed to sponsor His ministry while on earth. It almost takes a cynical mind to even think up these vain arguments to try and endorse fellowship with outright rank liberals of our own day and time on an ecclesiastical or church level.

We must understand that the presence of Judas among the other apostles does not give some kind of endorsement for ecclesiastical inclusivism with modernistic apostates today. Such a conclusion as this would simply ignore the multitudes of other examples that Jesus displayed when it came to correcting false teachers and false teaching. It would also eradicate the whole New Testament doctrine of ecclesiastical separation. This is simply another "straw man" argument that cannot be used to promote disobedience with liberal denominations today.

The whole incident is not to be compared to any large ecclesiastical level of false profession but rather to a local level where one individual is secretly deceiving the rest of the people in a given group. But even so, the New Evangelical has forgotten that Judas was not seen to be a liberal by outward profession or association. He appeared to be orthodox in every way – doctrine and practice. This certainly is not true of the liberals today who

stand behind the modernistic denominations and liberal Protestant names of their churches.

Today's liberals are liberals by profession and church association whereas Judas was handpicked by the Lord and appeared orthodox in every way. The outward profession of Judas was orthodox while the outward profession of the liberals today is not orthodox. In their seminaries and churches they outwardly deny the doctrines that surround Jesus Christ (virgin birth, blood atonement, resurrection and Second Coming) and the New Testament accounts of creation and the miracles of the Bible. There is a clear mark of rejection among the liberals of today that any discerning believer can see which is unlike the secret deception of Judas.

On a local level, most if not all churches have a Judas Iscariot sitting in the pew! They appear to be orthodox in their belief and practice but deep down they are an imposter and a false brethren (2 Cor. 11:26) who does not espouse Christ and the plan of salvation for his or her own life. The message of Judas does not give permission for ecclesiastical unity among outright known false religions and liberal Protestantism, rather it provides the timely lesson that on a local level of fellowship the possibility of a Judas is lurking in your midst.

What a message this is for the present hour in which we live. In any event, to try and use the lame anti-separatist argument that Jesus picked Judas to demonstrate that believers should mingle with unbelievers in ecumenical rallies and demonstrations is like trying to find a grain of sand that you dropped while walking along the seashore. It's simply erroneous. Jesus in His omniscience and sovereignty picked Judas to teach us the timely lesson that hypocrites will always mix with His true followers. But Jesus did not pick Judas to promote the philosophy that we should go out and pick the liberals to work with us and aid their ministries! To infer that He did is to find yet another hole in your bucket.

“There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole.”

8. There is the argument that revolves around the wheat and the tares.

Another argument that is often used is the “wheat and tare” argument, which is extrapolated from Matthew chapter thirteen.

Matthew 13:24-25

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.”

Matthew 13:28-30

“He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

I have personally heard well meaning preachers abuse this parable. They claim that it sends the message that we should never judge others in relationship to their salvation but let the Lord do the judging and sifting out until He returns. And in concluding this they evaporate everything else that the Bible says about judging unbelievers and separation from them. Surely this is not the thrust of this parable. Others claim that this is the 1st place prize for a verse that seemingly condones ecumenical efforts in reaching out to see people saved and promoting noble efforts in our society. But once again we must see the flaw of such reasoning.

The most obvious flaw of this whole argument is that Jesus was not promoting an unholy ecumenical mixture between the good and the bad any more than He was promoting the birds or Satan roosting among the world religions and creating an unholy growth within the church (vs. 31-32). Jesus was simply explaining the course of the age in this parable. In short, Jesus was saying that this is the inevitable way that things will progress over time and nobody will be able to stop the pollution from occurring on a large

scale. Jesus is not giving a prophecy to endorse 21st century techniques for ecumenical evangelism.

Something else must be seen and not missed. It is actually the enemy that sows the darnel seed among the wheat. It is not God. The enemy is certainly a reference to Satan in light of the thrust of the other parables. Therefore, it is Satan who is behind the promotion of this unholy mixture and not God. Furthermore, when the farmer of this parable told his servants to not remove the weeds unless they root up the wheat with them (vs. 29) does not destroy all that Jesus taught about separation from false prophets, wolves and swine. Nor does it do away with what the New Testament teaches about marking out false teachers and separating from heretics and unbelievers.

What is implied in the context is that no man will be able to undo what is going to happen on the broad spectrum of God's sovereign plan. We must remember that even behind the workings of the devil there is God. God allows Satan to move according to His overall sovereign plan. Therefore, no individual will be able to stop the mix of God's children and the devil's children from occurring on a large scale and it would be improper and even impossible to try and undo what God said would happen. This is why the parable tells us to not uproot the weeds with the wheat. We must let God's program come to fruition.

Where I live in Southeastern Pennsylvania there is usually the threat of coastal snowstorms (Nor'easters) during the winter months. They sometimes will move up the coastline and bring large amounts of moisture into our part of the state. Sometimes they will begin as snow and stay all snow. But other times as the system moves up the coastline it will draw into itself warmer air off the ocean and the snow will slowly begin to mix with frozen precipitation such as sleet. The change was going to occur as warmer invaded the system. No person could ever stop the mixture from occurring accept God.

The same is true when it comes to the mixing among the true and false together. Jesus said that this mix will occur and no man will be able to stop it from occurring. Therefore, to try and change the eternal purposes of God

on a large scale would be impossible. This is the main lesson that Jesus taught in the parable when explaining how the servant was not to uproot the tares among the wheat. You cannot change the course of prophecy no matter how hard you try. What will happen will happen. If you try to stop the tares from growing, you will also stop the wheat from growing and halt the entire plan of God from taking place.

In other words, we must rest in what Jesus said would happen and try to better our local situations where we are at in life without becoming discouraged and disarrayed at the whole evil mixture and deception that is occurring all around us. We must beware of false prophets as Jesus said and judge them by their fruits (Matt. 7:15-16). But we should not begrudge the plan of God and judge it as a failure on His part (Matt. 13:29). We cannot change the snow from mixing with the sleet no matter how hard we try! Likewise, we cannot change the mixture from occurring between God's children and the devil's children without defeating the whole purpose of God. So trying to remove all the weeds among the wheat seems to suggest the human effort to thwart the purposes of God, which in return will not happen.

Of course, it also suggests that we will never be able to totally see through all the deceptive lives of false children who will manifest themselves among God's children on a large scale. Even within local church ministries there are tares that cannot be seen! There are those who sit but do not respond. There are those who have the form of godliness but deny the power of God's saving grace in their lives.

This parable does not erase the command to separate from unbelievers in religious ecumenical practices (2 Cor. 6:14-17) and withdraw from unbelievers who represent religious apostasy (1 Timothy 6:5; 2 Timothy 3:5). Beware of basing your doctrinal teaching on the parables! Jesus was not giving a mandate for infiltration instead of separation just because "Whatever will be will be." He was simply stating the course of the age. We must remember that while Jesus stated that mixture would occur on a large scale He is not overriding the commands to do something about the problem on a local church scale by practicing biblical separation.

But the fact still remains that we will not be able to weed out the total deception that will occur on a large scale within the broad spectrum of Christendom. The field is too big and the farmer knows that God's purposes will not fail in the end. We should not allow God's program to discourage us as we see great mixture occurring today within the religious realm. Our God still reigns! God is still on the throne!

So in this parable Jesus was merely explaining how one must accept what is going to happen on the field at large. But Jesus was not saying that we must accept and endorse what is happening with the compromise of the believing church with unbelieving apostasy. There is the great need to keep our churches as pure as we can in light of the course of the age. If anything, this parable should provide an incentive for separation today. However, the mixture on the large scale will occur and nobody is going to stop it. God is not going to stop it because He has ordained it to be so in light of man's own sin and stubbornness.

Once again, we must see that Jesus was not giving a prophecy to endorse 21st century techniques for ecumenical evangelism. He was only explaining what will happen and what we cannot stop from happening in light of His sovereignty over the devil's activities ("the enemy"). There is no endorsement or hint that Jesus was condoning ecumenical church practices. To say that He is promoting ecumenicalism is to miss the obvious thrust in the parables of Matthew thirteen, which deal with the devilish and unholy mixture and damaging effect of the spreading of evil and the devil's children among God's true children until the kingdom arrives on earth.

"There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole."

9. There is the argument that revolves around what Jesus said about judging.

Matthew 7:1

"Judge not, that ye be not judged."

How many times have you heard someone use this argument as a way to escape all accountability from separated Bible principles? As we will see, this a futile argument used as a last resort to promote the unity of Roman Catholics with Protestants and all kinds of ecumenical folly.

This particular passage is actually warning against hypocritical judgment. Hypocritical judgment is that judgment which the Bible condemns (vs. 5 – “Thou hypocrite”). It’s a type of judgment that is passed on other people while at the same time a person’s own life is out of order and inwardly unspiritual. This was the problem with the Pharisees according to this text and others (see Matt. 23:27). The crux of the matter was this. The Pharisees did not lead any kind of true spiritual life. Their life consisted of meticulous laws that were manmade and not based upon any tradition of the Bible or law that God gave to them in regard to separation or true holiness (see Mark 7:4,8). The Pharisees were a bunch of Gospel rejecting people that created their own manmade rules, which had no Biblical foundation, or basis attached to them. Their regulations were not founded upon God’s true law, which required genuine holiness in the people’s lives. Instead, they tried to create a pseudo-holiness that was based upon man’s laws, which had no bearing on a holy walk, as God required it.

In Matthew chapter seven and elsewhere these Pharisees were seen to be hypocrites because in their own hearts they were full of sin and corruption. They tried to be exact on the outside but were full of sin on the inside. And these religious hypocrites or playactors would even judge people for not doing their manmade laws while all along they were unspiritual in their own lives and living out a scandal in their own hearts toward God. They were only concerned about the meticulous externals and not their own inward heart condition and were known to judge people as some kind of super spiritual and self-righteous person while all along they themselves were full of dead man’s bones on the inside! This means that these people were full of their own spiritual decay on the inside and were also full of hypocrisy (see Matt. 23:28).

“Judge not” prohibits a senseless self-righteous and unmerciful judgment of others on the basis of meticulous laws that have no bearing on truth or doctrine – even the doctrine of separation. But primarily the immediate

context is saying that it is a judgment which comes from an individual that is living an open spiritual scandal before God on the inside of their heart. This is hypocritical judgment. It's a type of judgment that is unworthy in every way because these people were living a double standard type of life.

On the inside they were living for their own lust and wickedness while on the outside they were following some strict form of rules that made them appear to be holy when in reality on the inside their hearts were full of sin. God does not want us to judge like a hypocrite who is so full of inconsistency in his own life and living a double standard life that he is not worthy to properly judge. This is a wrong type of judgment presented in Scripture.

However, this wrong type of judgment cannot be used to demote the righteous judgment that Jesus talked about and condoned (John 7:24). In fact, it's interesting that the very chapter used to promote all non-judgment and the ecumenical spirit of unity also talks about the dire need to judge all false teachers. Jesus reminds us of our solemn and sacred duty to judge religious heretics and rejects of the Gospel message and likens them to dogs and swine (Matt. 7:6). He also likens them to wolves in sheep's clothing.

Matthew 7:15-16

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

In order to label someone as a wolf, dog or swine you must judge them as imposters and rejecters of the Gospel message. We have to determine who these wolves, dogs and pigs are, don't we? These are not four-legged animals that Jesus is talking about. He is referring to the false teachers and those who opposed the Gospel. In this case it was those Pharisees who were religious rejects on a broad road that was leading to hell (Matt. 7:13-14) and who would not enter the kingdom (7:21). And Jesus tells us to beware of them and judge them as imposters. He does not say to use them in ecumenical meetings and hide them in committees promoting and organizing ecumenical rallies. Let us not miss this very clear point as so

many New Evangelicals do. God has clearly told us to not judge as a hypocrite but at the same time He has called us to judge all heretics and apostate organizations and never associate with them and condone their errors.

Romans 16:17

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

Once again, the New Evangelical argument of judging breaks down in light of contextual research and what Jesus actually said about the righteous and needful judgment of false teachers. There is yet another hole in the bucket of dear Liza.

There’s a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There’s a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole.”

10. There is the argument that revolves around the high priestly prayer of Jesus.

The John 17 argument that we all may be one is one of the most popular arguments for ecumenical practices. Jesus said in John 17:11: “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”

The New Evangelicals have always based their unscriptural unity on the basis of this high priestly prayer of Jesus. The fact of the matter is this. The prayer of Jesus for unity has already been answered. Jesus did not make this prayer looking ahead to the New Evangelical movement of compromise that would begin in 1948 and which continues to the present! He made this prayer in light of His ascension (vs. 1) and the coming of Pentecost, which would begin the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would unite the regenerate people together into a spiritual unity, which would be called the body of Christ or New Testament Church (see vs. 23).

This verse does not deal with organizational unity but with the theological spiritual unity or tie that we have together in the body of Christ (see vs. 20-21). They do not speak of organizational ecumenicalism but spiritual ecumenicalism, which brings people into the living body of Christ – the church (1 Cor. 12:13). The Bible teaches that all regenerate believers are already one in the body of Christ (Eph. 2:22). The “unity of the Spirit” is something that the Holy Spirit has already accomplished for us through His baptizing ministry (Eph. 4:3). God has made all believers (both Jew and Gentile) into a spiritual unity by creating us (new birth) into “one new man” (the church - Eph. 2:15-16). Therefore, Christians cannot make unity. They must simply “keep” or guard the unity that they already possess in Christ by upholding truth and obeying all of God’s commands (Eph. 4:3).

The unity Jesus spoke about was not experiential unity, but the unity of common eternal life which every believer in Christ shares and which results in the formation of the one body of Christ (the church) who now shares His life. The prayer of Jesus has already been answered! The prayers of Jesus are always answered!

The cure for unity is not an institutional union of ecclesiastical or religious faiths. Jesus was not praying for the unity of a single, worldwide, ecumenical church in which doctrinal heresy would be maintained along with orthodoxy. There is no true unity or love when we overlook falsehood, fail to expose error and condone apostasy (1 Cor. 13:6; 2 John 6). Furthermore, we cannot in a practical way keep or guard the unity that the Holy Spirit has already given to us (Eph. 4:3) without abiding by the truth of God’s Word.

Charles Spurgeon once said:

“I am quite sure that the best way to promote union, is to promote truth.”

So we must understand that Jesus was praying for a spiritual unity to be formed through the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost and the continued growth and expansion of this same church. As each person is regenerated they are added to this spiritual unity of the church and the fruit of Jesus’ answered prayer In John 17:11 continues to be witnessed as people are born again an spiritually united or added to the New Testament

church (Acts 2:47). This new spiritual organism or unity of people would then begin to witness of God's saving plan and the creation of this new unified organism called the church. And the witness of the church was intended to have an impact upon a world without Christ so that they too would believe on Christ for their salvation ("that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" – vs. 21). Thus, the prayer and words of Jesus do not condone organizational ecumenical practices. They only speak of spiritual ecumenicalism within the formation of the body of Christ.

"There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole."

11. There is the argument that revolves around Paul rejoicing over saved souls.

Another argument used to promote ecumenical behavior is based upon what Paul said in the book of Philippians when men were preaching the Gospel out of a wrong motive.

Philippians 1:15-18:

"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

Some confuse what Paul is saying here. They claim that even though a denomination has different doctrinal teachings in certain areas, if they preach the Gospel, then we can gather together with them in giant ecumenical rallies based upon what Paul said here. This is a false assumption and reading between the lines once again. In the first place, the text does not say that the preachers had various doctrinal differences. Second, Paul was not condoning their wrong attitude in their preaching.

Evidently these men were preaching for fame and out of pride wanting to elevate themselves above Paul while he was in prison. The text does not say that Paul was overlooking their doctrinal background or differences. Nor does it say that he overlooked their wrong motives in preaching. Nor does it infer that Paul would associate with them in some itinerant ministry. What it says is Paul was glad that the Gospel was getting out and people were getting saved! And all of us, both separatists and New Evangelicals, should rejoice when souls are saved, wherever they are saved, either in a separatist meeting or New Evangelical meeting.

Unless you are the devil you will rejoice when souls get saved! But this does not mean that we must succumb to the compromise of New Evangelical practices and the amalgamation with false religions. This is the farthest thought from Paul's mind when he makes this statement. To construe this meaning from what Paul says is to put words in Paul's mouth that are not there.

“There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole.”

12. There is the argument that revolves around what Gamaliel said.

And last, but not least, there is the Gamaliel argument (Acts 5:34-39). Who was Gamaliel? No, he was not the 12th president of the United States! He was the most noted and intellectual rabbi of his time. He was the kingpin of all kingpins. His most famous student was the Apostle Paul (Acts 22:3). The situation had arisen where the apostles were being charged of insurrection against the Jewish faith and what it stood for in historic Judaism. So old Gamaliel who was an unbeliever reminds the Jewish people about two other Jewish fanatics who led Jewish rebellions (Theudas & Judas) and who were conquered in their evil work (36-37).

His most famous argument in verses 38-39 is used by the ecumenicists of today as sound advice to promote ecumenical practices among the outright liberal denominations and Protestant churches. It goes like this.

Acts 5:38-39

“And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”

So Gamaliel reasons this way. If this Christian religion of the apostles were not of God, the best thing would be to leave it alone, and it would soon fade out. To combat it would only make it more determined to survive. In short, he reasoned that God would judge it and the Jews would not have to intervene if something was not of God according to the examples, he gave of the two insurrectionists. Of course, this argument is not true. Many godless institutions have flourished for centuries. In fact, they have gained more adherents than the truth. Look at Islam, Buddhism, Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, New Age practices and multitudes of other religions and evil practices, which are growing and thriving in the midst of a wicked society. But the New Evangelical crowd will take this argument and commit eisegesis with it by reading something into these verses what God never has taught.

Yes, God did not teach this! Gamaliel taught it! And Gamaliel was an unbeliever who thought he had a hotline to heaven and possessed some inclination about the sovereign working of God. But his advice is not to be used as “sound advice” to allow some practice to go untouched and unjudged in light of what normally occurs when error is left unchecked. Jesus spoke about the “leaven of the Pharisees” which not only connoted evil but also the ability of evil doctrine to spread and run ramped (Matt. 16:6-12). All error and sin left go or unchecked will cause it to expand like leaven or sour yeast until everything is effected (1 Cor. 5:6).

Who will you believe – Jesus or Gamaliel? The New Evangelicals believe Gamaliel but I will stick with what Jesus said! Therefore, we know that the advice of Gamaliel is not God’s advice. Historically, when something is left go and unimpeded it can have devastating doctrinal and ecclesiastical effects. The history of modernism or liberalism coming into the beloved churches will verify this to us. The churches failed to act swiftly and weed out the modernists and look at what has happened to the church! It’s

amazing how New Evangelicals will try and use such vain arguments to support their disobedience from God's Word and clear standards.

I once had this Gamaliel argument thrown in my face after denouncing a New Age practice that was being promoted over Christian radio by some popular celebrity figure. This clearly demanded warning directly from the pulpit in obedience to God's commands given to preachers who are to guard their flock from all error and deception (Hebrews 13:17). I was told to follow the advice of Gamaliel in the matter and leave these people in God's hand. What faulty logic this is in light of the actions of Jesus in the synagogues and temple. What pathetic advice this is in light of the New Testament warnings to judge all error and expose those who bring error before the church (Hebrews 5:14; 1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Thess. 5:12). There is a hole in Gamaliel's argument. His bucket is leaking!

There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza, dear Liza;
There's a hole in your bucket dear Liza a hole."

None of these New Evangelical arguments can hold water. In fact, we have discovered in each context, which these arguments are given, that they all break down. Furthermore, we must understand that none of them override God's clear commands for separation given to the New Testament church assemblies (2 Cor. 14-18; Romans 16:17; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:11-16).

Do we as separatists rejoice when souls are saved at ecumenical meetings? Yes, we do. As I've said before, only the devil would fail to rejoice when souls are saved! But let me say something else. We rejoice even more when souls are saved in a right setting where God's holiness and righteous standards are maintained. God wants to save people in His own holy way and not in the ecumenical way of compromise. Let us never forget that people will also get saved when we do things in God's way. And we can be sure that people will come to Christ without aiding error and heretics in doing it. The evangelism of lost sinners should be promoted in the context of a right setting where God's holiness is vindicated.

Psalm 145:17 says:

"The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."