

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS
"Part LIV: 3 John - The EXTENT Of Fellowship With God"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) When we ordered new pew Bibles for our 150th anniversary, we chose the New International Version.

However, because we chose the NIV, some fundamentalists would draw a line of separation against us, calling us "Neo-evangelical" for adopting what they consider and have called a "New Age Bible."

According to this school of thought, the **only** translation through which God is preserving His truth is the **original** King James Version of 1611! In fact, this group views the New Scofield Reference Edition (1967) and the New King James Version (1984) as even "greater impostors" of God's truth than the New International Version, **and that using translations other than the 1611 King James Version causes one to head into APOSTASY!** (William P. Grady, Final Authority: A Christian's Guide to the King James Bible, ch. XVII, "The Cutting Edge of Apostasy," p. 299)

Well, are we going "apostate" away from God's truths for selecting the NIV for our Church's pew Bibles? How can we tell?!

(2) For a number of years, there was talk on whether or not we should change our church's name to something like, "Nepaug Bible Church". I am told that people have passed by our church to attend sound churches **beyond** us for fear that our name, which includes the word, "Congregational" meant we were theologically unsound!

Well, are we going "apostate" because we still have the word, "Congregational" in our Church's title? We admit that a large number of "Congregational" churches don't even preach the Bible, so are we flirting with apostasy by keeping our name? Who can tell?

(3) Some believe that the pastor must have an "altar call" to be a godly pastor. If he doesn't, he is failing to "do the work of an evangelist" commanded of him in 2 Timothy 4:5b.

Well, is Nepaug Church slipping into apostasy because Pastor Don Shell does not perform "altar calls" in giving the gospel?! How can we tell?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I know the Bible teaches separation from apostates (2 John 9-11) and even withdrawing from errant Christians (2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15). However, can one go too FAR and be DIVISIVE with such separation efforts? If so, WHERE should that line be drawn?!"

- I. **Due to man's original sin in Eden, he has often DISTORTED TRUE SEPARATION with UNGODLY DIVISIVENESS:**
 - A. God created man free from sin, and man experienced fulfillment in unity with his fellow man and with God, Gn. 2:22,25; 3:8 implied.
 1. When God created the first man and woman, they were so transparent in their relationship with one another that their mutual total absence of clothing was not an issue, Gen. 2:22,25.
 2. In fact, in this state, Adam and Eve would even walk and talk with a holy God on a regular basis (implied), Gen. 3:8a.
 - B. However, as soon as man sinned, his preoccupation with **self** became so pronounced that **errant** relationship **barriers** arose:
 1. Following disobedience to God, Adam and Eve became so self-conscious that they noticed their physical differences, and hid from one another with fig leaf aprons, Gen. 3:7.
 2. Following their sin, to preserve their reputations **selfishly**, they blamed **others**: (a) Adam blamed God for giving him Eve to lead him into sin, Gn. 3:12a; (b) he also blamed Eve, 3:12b; (c) when confronted by God, Eve blamed the serpent, Gen. 3:13.
 3. In the next generation, Cain even murdered his brother, Abel out of selfish jealousy for God's preference of Abel's sacrifice, Gen. 4:1-8.
 - C. This problem continued through history, affecting the Church:
 1. When John wrote a letter to a church where godly associate, Gaius attended, despotic leader Diotrephes refused the Apostle's letter and even excommunicated Christians who housed his associate evangelists under the **guise** of Biblical separation, 3 John 9b.
 2. In this way, Diotrephes could secure a following for his **ego**, v. 9a!
- II. **Accordingly, to DEFINE the correct EXTENT of Biblical SEPARATION in 2 John, God had the Apostle John write 3 John!**
 - A. In his introduction to 3 John, the Apostle John promoted a loving attachment to **ALL** Christians who lived and adhered to God's **truth**:

1. John expressed love to Gaius **based on** his devotion to the **truth**:
 - a. John expressed his attitude of love toward Gaius, 3 John 1.
 - b. He told of his loving desire that Gaius enjoy **physical** health in accord to the health of his **soul**, 3 John 2.
 - c. John expressed his great **joy** upon hearing of Gaius' comradery with him in God's **truth**, 2 John 3-4.
 2. But **BEYOND** expressing love for **familiar GAIUS**, John praised Gaius for housing **truth-asserting** itinerant evangelists though they were humanly **unfamiliar** to **Gaius**, 3 Jn. 5-7. In fact, John noted that **ALL** believers should **support ALL** such **truth-adhering** ministers **though** they were **not humanly familiar** with them, v. 8!
- B. **Conversely**, John condemned Diotrephes' **separation** practice that **sinfully DISTORTED** God's **true separation practice**, 3 John 9-12:
1. Because he selfishly sought preeminence, Diotrephes practiced ungodly division, 3 Jn. 9-10: he sought to isolate church members from John and his itinerant associates to gain a following, doing so through (a) rejecting John's writings (3 Jn. 9b), (b) discrediting him (3 Jn. 10b), (c) refusing to house his itinerant ministers (3 Jn. 10c) and (d) excommunicating all who did, v. 10d!
 2. John thus urged Gaius not to practice such divisiveness, but to receive men like Demetrius who carried this epistle to Gaius, and that based upon **three criteria**. (These criteria act as **MEASURES** for certifying such leaders **TODAY**)
 - a. Demetrius came recommended by **all** who **knew** him, 3 Jn. 12a.
 - b. His **life** and **belief** conformed to the **truth** as well, 3 Jn. 12b.
 - c. He was recommended by **credible Church leaders**, 3 Jn. 12c,d!
- III. **3 John adds to the "thread of redemption" in revealing that God's TRUTH is the true GROUNDS for UNIFYING ALL men!**

Application: *To function well in godly separation AND true unity, (1) begin by (a) trusting Christ as Savior from sin (Jn. 3:16; Acts 17:30). (b) As a believer, confess sins we do to restore fellowship with God and other godly believers (1 Jn. 1:9,7) and (c) obey Scripture (1 Jn. 2:3-6) in the enabling of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23). (2) Then, with respect to a party in question, (a) using ((a)) Scripture (3 Jn. 12b; 2 Tim. 3:13,15-17), ((b)) references from credible Christian leaders (3 Jn. 12c,d; 2 Tim. 3:13,14a,b) and ((c)) the witness of believers who have SEEN his life (3 Jn. 12a), and (b) making adherence to the truth--not politics--the basis of our examination (v. 9-10), (c) decide well on fellowship or separation!*

Lesson: *Just as believers must SEPARATE from ungodly parties who resist God's TRUTH to preserve fellowship with God, mutual adherence to that TRUTH is the grounds for UNITY with ALL who adhere to it!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

We apply the test of **truth** to the pew Bible, Church name and pastoral altar call issues in the introduction to see if we are **acceptable**:

(1) Regarding what version to use: (a) Job 36:33 in the KJV reads: "The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapor." (Ryrie St. Bib., KJV, p. 790) An English-speaking pastor cannot make sense of this rendering, so he **cannot OBEY** 2 Tim. 4:1-2 and preach on it **unless** he gets help **OUTSIDE** of the **KJV**! (The NIV helps us by translating the verse: "His thunder announces the coming storm; even the cattle make known its approach.") (b) Unlike claims by KJV proponents, the Textus Receptus manuscript behind the KJV is **not** superior to other manuscripts: the KJV's 1 John 5:7b-8a does not appear in **any** Greek manuscript except **obvious** Greek **translations** from **late Latin** ones, Ryr. St. Bi., KJV, fn. (c) Our Congregationalist forefathers **left** Europe on the Mayflower in part **because** they were **upset** that **Episcopalian** King James VI produced his **1611 KJV** Bible and sought to **force it upon** them! (Walker, A History of the Christian Church, p. 407-409) For **decades**, **godly Congregationalists** did **not condone** the **1611 KJV**! (d) Since it is impossible to relate meaning perfectly by way of translation from one language to another, only the **autograph manuscripts** of Scripture are inspired, Mtt. 5:18! Thus, we recommend believers check the KJV, NIV **and** NASB for meaning!

(2) Regarding our Church name, the **original** Congregationalists were strong adherents to Biblical truth and the Gospel, cf. Statement of Faith of Nepaug Church, March 9th, 1849, Arts. Second, Fourth and Seventh! As long as we announce our theological fidelity to the Word of God, and stick by it, we are no more apostate than were our Congregationalist forefathers that first Thanksgiving in America!

(3) Regarding the absence of "altar calls" in giving the Gospel, nowhere in Scripture are pastors commanded to use "altar calls" in giving the Gospel. In fact, Peter saw people believe before he ever got to the end of his sermon in Acts 10:42 -44! Pastor Shell seeks to obey James 3:17-18 NIV in promoting peace in his hearers as unrest exists in many lives today over pastoral **abuses** of altar call deliveries!

Checking Scripture and credible input, our Church name, pew Bible selection and gospel presentation methods are sound! We are to be INCLUDED in the fellowship with all godly believers!