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Free Bible Article: "NeoSectarian Words"

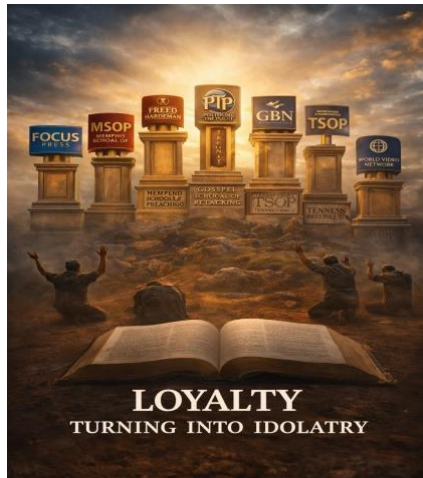
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Salted Speech Colossians 4:6

~ The brotherhood of man has been turning out too few brothers and too many hoods.

~Let's not jeeringly say, "Look what the world is coming to," but joyfully say, "Look what has come to the world!"

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From Bereans to Brand Ambassadors When Loyalty Becomes Idolatry

DR. BRAD HARRUB
MAR 30



There is a subtle danger creeping through portions of the brotherhood—quiet, respectable, and often applauded. It doesn't look like rebellion. It doesn't sound like apostasy. In fact, it often wraps itself in the language of "soundness" and "faithfulness."

But at its core, it is something far more serious. It is a form of idolatry. Not the kind carved out of wood or stone—but the kind built in the heart. The kind that elevates men, movements, and institutions to a place they were never meant to occupy.

We are raising up disciples—not of Christ—but of platforms, programs, and personalities.

Spend a little time listening and you'll hear it. Some wear their allegiance like a badge of honor. They are "GBN guys," or "PTP guys," or "Focus Press guys" or loyal to Memphis School of Preaching, TSOP, WVBS, AP, Freed-Hardeman University, Faulkner University, Harding University, etc.

Others associate faithfulness according to what lectureships you attend. Still, others attach themselves to a well-known preacher whose name carries weight in certain circles.

And here is the uncomfortable truth: in some cases, their loyalty to these entities runs deeper than their devotion to Jesus Christ.

Friends, that is not just a problem. That is idolatry.

Any time something begins to rival Christ for our loyalty, shape our thinking more than Scripture, or control what we are willing to say and believe—it has become an idol. We may not bow before it, but we defend it, protect it, and sometimes even fear crossing it more than we fear God. (We won't even touch on how many of these "Christian" institutions devour or slander others in competition for donations.)

Listen carefully to the conversations—I've heard it personally dozens of times.

Many Christians can tell you exactly where a certain preacher stands on an issue. They can quote the position of a school or a network with precision. They know what "our circle" says. But if you were to ask them, "What do the Scriptures say?"—suddenly the confidence fades.

Friends, that should never be the case. I don't want people "following me" or quoting "my position." I want people following Christ and quoting God's Word!

We are not called to know what a man teaches—we are called to know what God has said.

When a man feels pressure to "carry the party platform" or risk being written up, sidelined, or blasted from the pulpit, something is wrong. When brethren whisper, "You better not say that—you'll get labeled," we've crossed a dangerous line. When truth is filtered through "What will they think?" instead of "What does Scripture say?" we are no longer standing on solid ground.

We have replaced the authority of God's Word with the approval of men.

And make no mistake—this is not new. The apostle Paul dealt with it head-on when brethren were dividing themselves by personalities: "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," "I am of Cephas." His response was simple and cutting: "Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13).

Today, the names have changed—but the problem hasn't.
"I'm with this school."

"I follow that network."

"I line up with that preacher."

They may not always say it out loud—but their actions speak volumes. Brethren, we are not called to be disciples of institutions. We are not called to be defenders of organizations. We are not called to be followers of preachers. We are called to take up our cross and follow Christ.

Layered on top of this idolatry is another troubling trend: it has become fashionable to position oneself as holding the most conservative view on every issue.

Forget any kind of balance. If you are going to be in the "in crowd" you must draw lines of fellowship and hold the most conservative position on any given topic.

These individuals would argue they are simply "following Scripture" and "standing for the Truth." But somewhere along the way, the most "conservative" position became a badge to wear rather than a conviction to examine. For some, the goal is no longer simply to be biblical—but to be more conservative than the next man, as if that alone secures the moral high ground. But friends, being the "most conservative" is not the standard. These individuals are often legalistic and draw lines of tradition and fellowship the Bible does not hold. Sadly, they come across as the Pharisees Jesus rebuked in His day.

It is entirely possible to defend a position that is stricter than Scripture—and still be wrong. It is possible to bind where God has not bound and then congratulate ourselves for our "soundness." That is not faithfulness. That is imbalance. That's not the moral high ground. It's Pharisaical.

God never called us to outflank each other in strictness. He called us to rightly divide the Word of truth. He called us to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent—not to build a reputation on being the hardest line in the room. He called us to teach the Truth in love.

I encourage you—open a Bible without a filter, without a party platform, and without trying to impress anyone. Read what God's Word says!

We don't need more extremes.

We need more balance.

We need more humility. (Yes, I said humility, because some of these people/organizations come across that they are never wrong about anything. In fact, they come across rather prideful.) We need more Scripture.

I have watched too many good men get devoured for preaching, teaching, or writing something that does not conform with certain organizations or popular preacher's view. While claiming to "love the faithful" these groups destroy men's lives—and it needs to stop.

The church needs to stop eating its own!!

At the end of the day, none of these entities will stand in judgment for us.

Not a network.

Not a university.

Not a school of preaching.

Not a "big name" preacher.

Only Christ.

That is why the example of the Bereans is so desperately needed today. In Acts 17:11, they were described as "more noble" because they did not blindly accept what they were taught—EVEN FROM AN APOSTLE. They searched the Scriptures daily to see whether those things were so.

Think about that:

They didn't say, "Well, Paul said it, so that settles it."

They didn't say, "This aligns with that networks view, so it must be right."

They didn't say, "He graduated from MSOP so he must be sound."

They opened the Word of God and examined it for themselves.

That is the standard.

Not tradition.

Not reputation.

Not affiliation.

Not "who is more conservative."

Scripture.

If what is being taught lines up with God's Word, hold to it—no matter who teaches it. If it does not, reject it—no matter how popular, powerful, or well-connected the source may be.

Yes, there is value in sound institutions. And let me go on record saying I am thankful for many of them!! Yes, there are faithful preachers who deserve respect—and I am very thankful for them! But the moment those things begin to replace personal study, independent conviction, and unwavering allegiance to Christ, they become idols.

And idols—even respectable ones—must be torn down.

We must never forget: it is possible to be "in the right circle" and still be wrong.

I didn't write this article to hurt any particular person or organization. My apologies if you feel personally attacked--that was not my intent. I truly wish anyone doing the work of Christ well. I love the church and those who labor for her. But the constant bashing and drawing lines of lines of fellowship need to stop.

So let me ask you plainly—

Are you a disciple of Christ...or a disciple of a brand?

Open your Bible.

And be a Berean again.

----Dr. Brad Harrub