

# THE DANGER OF DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH

## LESSON SEVEN

### INTRODUCTION:

1. The church of the New Testament designed and purposed by the God of heaven from eternity, built by the Lord Jesus Christ, and set forth in its identity by the Holy Spirit on the pages of the New Testament, was in no sense a denominational institution.
2. It is distinct and separate from every human institution on earth.
3. The New Testament church must remain unspotted from the world in character, in name, in doctrine, in organization, in work and in worship.
4. The undenominational character can only be maintained at the price of eternal vigilance. Acts 20: 20 - 31
5. Apostasy was imminent in apostolic days. II Thess. 2:7
6. Paul warned against this danger of becoming careless in respect for Divine Law and authority. II Tim. 4: 1 - 5
7. But, in spite of divine warnings, apostasy came, and with it sectarianism and denominationalism.
8. People do not often profit by history.
  - A. The same mistakes are made over and over again. I Cor. 11: 19
9. We live in a time of ferment and change in the religious world.
10. There are momentous upheavals taking place in the religious world.

### I. THE DENOMINATIONAL WORLD IS MAKING GREAT CHANGES.

1. The feminist movement has had a great impact on denominationalism.
2. More and more women are taking leadership roles in denominations.
  - A. The Methodists have many women preachers.
  - B. The Disciples of Christ have women preachers.
  - C. Many denominations have women preachers.
3. The standard for morals has been lowered.

- A. Homosexuals are allowed to preach.
  - B. Marriage, divorce, and remarriage are for any cause.
  - C. Immodesty.
  - D. Drinking.
  - E. Dancing.
  - F. Worldliness is not dealt with in denominational churches.
4. Denominations are just big social clubs.
- A. The emphasis is on the outward man -- the flesh.
5. Everything is for man's convenience.
- A. Many are turning from the first day of the week worship to Saturday night.
  - B. Members don't want to be involved in the work.
6. Many deny the Bible is inspired of God.

## II. LIBERAL CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE MAKING GREAT CHANGES

1. A change in the emphasis on BAPTISM for the remission of sins.
- A. Some dispute whether baptism is even necessary (*Buff Scott, Jr.*)
  - B. Some say you don't have to understand its purpose (generic baptism). (*Rubel Shelly and Jimmy Allen*)
  - C. Some will affirm that God will accept the sinner on the basis of his faith before and without baptism. (*Edward Fudge*)
  - D. New Testament Principles:
    - a. Christianity is a taught religion-- Isa. 54: 13; Jer. 31: 31 - 34; John 6:45; Matt. 28:19
    - b. One must know the truth before the truth can set him free -- John 8:32; Rom 6: 3 -4; 6:17; Acts 2:38
    - c. Baptism is said to be "*For the remission of sins*". -- Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16; I Pet. 3:21
2. A change in the public worship of the church.

- A. Some are now calling for the use of instrumental music in the worship.
  - B. For special music in the assembly, choirs, and solos...
3. A change in the role of women in the public assembly.
- A. It is taught by some that women should be full partners in leading and directing public worship.
  - B. Robert Randolph and Lynn Mitchell said they "*have no problem with women serving as elders today...*"
  - C. The New Testament -- I Tim. 2:11 - 12; I Cor. 14: 34 -35
4. A change to allow for greater inter-denominational participation.
- A. There is a desire among liberal thinkers to engage in fellowship and joint activity with denominational bodies.
  - B. An effort to justify this view is made on the basis of a misapprehension of Romans 14.
  - C. Keep in mind, Romans 14 is discussing matters of indifference, individual matters of liberty -- not doctrinal matters.
  - D. II John 9 - 11
5. A change in the distinctive plea of churches of Christ.
- A. There are those who abandon the restoration plea to restore the New Testament church in the present day.
  - B. They view the church as simply "another denomination", and they wish for it to take its place in the religious world as "One among many denominations"...
6. A change in the understanding of salvation by Grace.
- A. More and more is said that grace covers all our differences, so that doctrine now matters little.
  - B. Some contend that we cannot really know whether we have the truth.
  - C. With this doctrine, one cannot know who is right and who is wrong.
  - D. In the first century, the apostles preached and wrote with certainty.
    - a. I Cor. 14: 37
    - b. Acts 2:36

- c. II John 9 -11
- d. Acts 6:7
- e. Heb. 10:26
- f. Heb. 5:14
- g. Eph. 5:17; 3: 3 - 4

### III. INDICATIONS THAT SHOW LIBERAL CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE MOVING INTO THE MAIN STREAM OF DENOMINATIONALISM:

1. A development of a profession clergy
2. A tendency to make doctrinal compromise with denominational friends.
3. A copying of denominational concepts.
4. Spending more and more church money on social functions.
5. Orienting the church along recreational lines.
6. A growing acceptance of instrumental music as being an expedient.
7. The denying the pattern of authority.
8. The advocating of "unity in diversity".
9. The advocating of the New Hermeneutics -- the only thing binding is a direct command.
10. Worldliness and secularism has pervaded.
11. They have lost sight of the church as God's means of saving the lost world.

*Donald Townsley*

*(Riverbend 1993)*