

III. Progressive Christianity in Biblical Perspective
Historic Biblical Christianity and Contemporary Progressive Christianity
Five Marks of Progressive Christianity
Galatians 1:6–12
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For this study we will be in Galatians 1. We will be looking at the five marks of progressive Christianity so that you can recognize it when it shows up in the lives of ministries or churches or Christian institutions. One of the points I'm going to bring out today is that progressive Christianity loses its dependence upon the supremacy of God's Word and begins to embrace extra Biblical literature that comes from ungodly resources and is framed, but yet is used and, therefore, begins to penetrate the church. There are two of those movements that I want to deal with in our next two studies. One of those is Revoice and then the next will be critical theory along with its subsets of critical race theory, critical law theory, as well as intersectionality. Then I will finish up with, the best way to keep away from the counterfeits is to know the real deal. So, we'll finish up with the historic Biblical Christianity so that we see what we're supposed to be doing not just avoiding what we're not supposed to be doing as it would attempt to adulterate the church with false teaching that Satan brings.

Before we get to our text of Scripture for this study, I want to address an open letter that a dear friend of mine who pastors in Atlanta wrote, Michael Youssef, the pastor of the Church of the Apostles. It was a letter of deep concern, a letter of concern that was just plain spoken. This is what he said. "In the 1970s and 1980s, I was in a mainline denomination, the episcopal church, and we began to embrace heresy. We began to falter in our faithfulness to the Word of God. Our very church constitutions and confessions were being abandoned. Then we began to lose the Biblical roles of men and women in the church and in the family. We began to lose the ethics of Biblical sexuality within the context of marriage, even losing marriage and entertaining notions such as same sex marriage, and then allowing the faltering of the Biblical ethics that sex belongs in a covenantal monogamous heterosexual marriage. I saw all that happening in my church and in the other mainline denominations. Now, my heart is breaking, because I see it happening in the evangelical church, even within my own branch." Immediately, I identified with him.

The mainline church has lost their battle. It's just a matter of time until the endowments run out, and it loses its very existence, but what about the evangelical church that claims the authority of God's Word, that claims the exclusivity of the saving work of Christ in the Gospel? What about the evangelical church that claims that the Scripture alone is our only rule of faith and practice? What about the evangelical church and what we see happening within its boundaries, within its individual churches and denominations? This is what I think the issue is. The very same thing that destroyed the mainline churches at the end of the 19th century moving into the 20th century is destroying the evangelical church at the end of the 20th century as it moves into the 21st century.

In the mainline church, it was liberal Christianity in the 19th century that was moving to the 20th century. In the evangelical church, the inroads are made by not liberal Christianity as it would be its identifying titles, but by progressive Christianity. It is my strong conviction that progressive Christianity is liberal Christianity 2.0. It is cut from the same bolt of cloth. So, what do you see? You see the loss of the God-given, celebrated distinctives of men and women in marriage, in family, in church, and the notions of pagan egalitarianism creeping into the church

that men and women are simply interchangeable with each other. There's really no difference. Well, you have to put up with that little biological problem and physically, they don't seem to be alike, but the notion that they're interchangeable, and then the entertainment of the LGBTQ agenda, which, by the way, in order to accept people you have to accept their agendas, don't you? How can you say you love someone if you don't accept their agenda? Then the breakdown of marriage, the lack of a clear voice on the issue of the Biblical doctrine of marriage, Biblical sexuality, all of those things are beginning to falter and to fall away. Why? Because progressive Christianity infects the churches that cored it the same way that liberal Christianity infected the churches 100 plus years ago.

Liberal Christianity did not start out as a movement to destroy the church. On the contrary, it was the latest movement that would save the church from cultural irrelevance, that with the rise of the modern mind and the rise of modern thought, there was so much we were doing and believing that if you want to impact the culture, then you certainly can't continue to do that. So, we want to save the church from cultural irrelevance. Why? Because the new mission of the church became cultural transformation, that we want the seat at the table, and you began to find all of these publications and organizations, even the title, the Protestant Century of cultural transformation that we are going to bring the Kingdom of God with a utopia into this world through the actions of the church, and we are going to see the social improvements. All of that began to be part and parcel of what was driving liberal Christianity, motivation, save the church from cultural irrelevance and position the church to fulfill its mission and its mission now was cultural transformation.

The simple fact is, whatever your functional mission becomes will eventually define your message and your ministries. So, if the mission is cultural transformation, and the motivation is to be accepted by the culture and applauded by the culture instead of being declared irrelevant by the culture, then the message becomes a download of the culture's message, so a cultural accommodation. In that day and time, we were told that the modern man cannot accept the supernatural dynamics in our confession of faith, virgin birth, resurrection, all of those things. So, liberal Christianity then gave birth to theological liberalism, which, basically, is going through the confession and vacuuming out everything that has something supernatural to it because that can't be presented to the modern mind. That would mean automatic rejection. Now, the motivation led to a new mission, and the mission leads to a new message as the very glorious truths of who God is and what God does as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer are vacuumed out or eviscerated with theological liberalism, which then turned the church into nothing more than a cultural philanthropic organization. With this same pattern we saw the social justice movement giving birth to a social gospel, just like a church growth movement gives birth to a pragmatic gospel, or a self-esteem movement gives birth to a therapeutic gospel.

We have a Gospel that doesn't make sense but it is very clear, but it makes no sense if the mission doesn't line up with the message. So, people will change the mission and then they end up changing the message, but God knows no such contradictions. God says, "Your motivation is not to save the church from irrelevance. Your motivation is to love Me, love the lost and love one another with the Truth. If you love Me, you will not edit My commandments, not dismiss them, you'll keep them." What was His last commandment to the church? He gave us our mission in Matthew 28 to go make disciples. How do you make disciples? You make disciples by teaching them to observe all that He has commanded you as the whole council of God is brought to bare in the lives of people as it is wrapped and contoured by the Gospel of saving grace in Christ.

What is the Gospel? The Gospel is not a message of utopia here. We certainly want people to be blessed by truth, love, grace and mercy throughout society, but our mission is not utopia, nor is our mission dystopia. Our mission is the spreading of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God which is sinners saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That's our mission. It doesn't sound very grand because that's a very narrow mission, but the church has a narrow mission. There's a theologian that has greatly affected me, although I've modified some of his positions from my own convictions. His name was Abraham Kuyper, and he said that there's spheres of life that God has created. They're interdependent, but they are not overlaid with each other. They are three basic – church, state, and family – and you need to understand what the lanes are for the church, the state, and the family. The church is not the state and it's not the family, but here is what we do. We lead people to Christ, disciple them, send them into the family, and send them into the church. So, cultural transformation may not be our mission, but it will be a consequence because when people get right with God, then their lives change, and when their lives change, everything around them begins to change.

A reason a pagan says in Europe 25 years after the ascension of Jesus, these people have turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6) is not because Paul had a mission to turn the world upside down, the reason they said it, is because Paul was on mission to turn sinners right side up. When sinners get turned right side up through the Gospel and the whole council of God, then everything that happens in their lives begins to transform, and that upends everything.

In the last study I gave you an example from the church at Ephesus, where Ephesus ended up with economic riots, unrest, and with all kinds of violence that was taking place. Why? Because Paul was leading people to Christ and discipling them, and as he did it, everything began to change including the business of idolatry began to go down the tubes. So, the people who were invested in Artemis and Diana tried to kill Paul. Paul didn't go in there to redo the industry and the economic strata, he went in there to redo the lives of men and women with the Gospel, but when people were getting saved and discipled, they didn't buy idols any longer. There are other things that you don't do any longer not that you're doing those things to be saved, you're doing those things because of the call of the Gospel to honor your Savior, and that begins to change everything around it. So, we have a mission to make disciples, and that means we have a message that's fitted for it. It's called the Gospel, that through Jesus Christ and His redeeming work on the cross, as He sends the Spirit of God to track us down, God through His Word and His Spirit is search out and save sinners.

You're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. They are saved from all of their sins, being saved from the practice of sin, and one day will be saved from even the presence of sin. There's the blessings that the Gospel brings of regeneration. You're born again and the power of sin has been broken in your life. You're adopted, and the position of sin has been eradicated. You're now in the family of God. You are right with God, you're justified, so the penalty of sin has been removed, and because of the Word of God, the Spirit of God, the means of grace and being nurtured within the church of Christ that's been faithful, then the practice of sin is being eradicated in sanctification, regeneration, justification, adoption, and one day the presence of sin in glorification. This changes people's lives, which changes their marriages, which changes their families, which changes the way they do business, which changes everything else in all of life.

I'll give you an illustration of this. About 30 years ago, I went to do a conference in Brazil, and while I was there I went to the Amazon where Jim Elliot and the other four missionaries gave their life. Actually, one of the men that was in the tribe that had killed Jim

Elliot and Nate Saint, put me in his dugout canoe and we went down the river. He landed me at the bar, and let me just stayed there for a couple of hours as I thought through all that I had studied of what happened on that little sandbar in the middle of that tributary to the Amazon River. I came back and stayed that night in the village in the old home of Elizabeth Elliot that she had had there. After those men died who refused to shoot their captors and gave their lives up, the women came in later and began to do evangelism and discipleship.

So, here was a culture that was totally being destroyed with vengeance killing, with family anarchy, with sexual immorality and perversion, all the stuff that was happening in this isolated tribe, but what Jim Elliot led that team to do was not to transform the village, but to transform the villagers, and then began to teach them, and they came to Christ. Now, when you go down there, 85% of the villagers know Christ. Families are stabilized, a burgeoning economy that is being done well. People now have no more tripwires in front of their huts any longer but open doors. I was able to lay down and go to sleep. In fact, I thought about myself, speaking of transformation, I'm riding with the guy that killed them and I'm not even thinking about it. I did think one time as I was in the dugout canoe, "I do hope and pray sanctification has taken hold here pretty good for this guy," but that's what happens when lives are changed by the Gospel. That's why it's important.

We're not being insensitive to the issues of the culture. The heart of the problem is the problem with the heart, and that's our mission. That's our ministry, so that we can then win people to Christ and send them into the media, the performing arts, into politics, into ministry, into academia, and to all of those areas with a Christian mind and the saving work of Christ going on their life. So, the church's mission is narrow, but its message undergirded by the Gospel is broad and comprehensive. When we do our narrow mission with our broad message of the whole council of God teaching them to observe all that He has commanded us, we turn out Christians and your mission as a Christian is broad. Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31). Here's your mission. You're the salt of the Earth. You're the light of the world, but you can't do that unless the church stays on mission, on message, and in ministry.

I wanted to tell Mr. Youssef that Christian liberalism did wrong motivation, wrong mission, wrong message, and wrong ministries. It's exactly what progressive Christianity does. I've read the most salient ones. Their motivation is to rescue Christianity from the dustbin of history. Our children will not be there. Look at them leaving Christianity by the droves. I believe the reason that we as the evangelical church are not making an impact like we want to make and should be making in the lives of our young people, is not because we need a better mission and a better message. It's we haven't been doing the mission and message. We've gotten off track and our churches are five miles wide and one inch deep. That's the problem. Also, parents have said one thing but do something else. When the kids grow up, they said, "I'm not going to play the game one Sunday a month. I'm just not going to do it." The problem that we've had is not that we have the wrong message and the wrong mission. The problem is, we haven't stayed on mission and on message. So, what is the motivation? We're going to save the church, same thing as liberal Christianity. Secondly, cultural transformation. Seek the welfare of the city. Human flourishing, that's our objective.

I think that there are many good consequences of the church being on mission and on message. I want to see the blessing of the Gospel flow into the lives and neighborhoods because people's lives are being changed. I want to disciple politicians who know how make sensible policies that will bless other people. All of that needs to be done, but that's not our mission as the

church. Our mission is to rescue the perishing, teach them the Word of God, disciple them, and send them out into the world with a new heart, a new record, a new life, and a renewed mind in the Lord, but that's not what's happening. Progressive Christianity says, "No. We have to save the church." Even though Jesus has already said, "You be faithful. I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it," but we think we need to save the church, and we need to save the church by giving it a dressed up mission that the culture wants us to have and, eventually, we then begin to accommodate the message to what the culture wants us to have.

In this study, I want to try to draw this out for you with just a couple of thoughts from Galatians and then give you five marks to think about as we look to the next study. So, the problem encountered in the '70s and '80s from the downgrade of liberal Christianity is what we are seeing again now, but this time it is the downgrade of Christianity because of progressive Christianity, which is only a recycled 2.0 liberal Christianity. People tend to push back on me on this and say, "Who wants to hear any progressive pushing to take out the virgin birth, to deny the resurrection?" No, not yet, but I'll tell you what the request has been. Be silent on Biblical ethics of sexuality. Be silent on the sanctity of marriage. Be silent on the sanctity of life. Be silent on the sanctity of gender. So, the church obediently is canceled in the whole council of God and no longer preaches it because they're told the culture won't accept them, and they'll become irrelevant. The pulpits begin to compromise. When the pulpits compromise, the pew compromises. When the pew compromises, the witness is lost.

Paul knew this was so crucial, which is why when he saw another gospel creeping into the churches in Galatia, he wrote them this letter. Galatians 1:6–12 says [6] *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— [7] not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. [9] As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*

[10] For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

[11] For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. [12] For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

This doesn't come without infiltration of false teachers. He calls them troublemakers. Satan has three strategies: intimidation to silence the church, imitation to confuse the church, and infiltration of false teachers in the church. The number one doctrine in the Bible is the Gospel. That's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, "I delivered to you that which is of first importance," the Gospel. Everything else in the Bible is important, but if you get the gospel wrong, then you get everything else wrong. My brother-in-law who makes the trusses for our house, and he was sharing with me how they made these large wooden trusses that were exposed. This happened to be a pretty good expanse. He told me, "We're taking our time on this because if we get off just a millimeter right here at the beginning, when we get there, we're going to be a foot off, and it's going to be no good." When you get off of the Gospel, all the other doctrines collapse because the Gospel is the foundation, the formation, and the motivation of the Christian life. So, when Paul saw the gospel being attacked, he went on the war path to maintain the purity of the Gospel, for false teachers had infiltrated them and were troubling them.

Paul said this to the church at Acts, "Upon my departure, savage wolves will come in among you" (Acts 20:29–30). The teachers of the church were teaching distorted things and leading the sheep astray away from Christ to themselves. Then Paul in Galatians 1:8 pronounces an anathema. Because this issue of the Gospel is so important he pronounces an anathema upon himself and an angel if he or even an angel ever taught something other than the Gospel. You don't just listen because an angel is preaching, you have to test everything against the Bible. If it is being contrary to the Word of God, the whole council of God, you deal with it, but if it's going after the most primary truth of all in the Bible, the Gospel, this angel that's there preaching something else, you take him by his ethereal pants and throw him out the door. Paul says if it is him then pronounce church discipline upon him.

Nobody can get saved without the Gospel message so, we can't allow another gospel. This is something we've got to be on the alert for. The Gospel that was delivered in the first century of all of the promises of God being yes and Amen in Christ, the redeeming triumphant work of Christ on the cross, His resurrection, ascension, second coming, and the outpouring of the Spirit of God, must never be edited. In fact, nothing in the Bible is to be edited. If any man adds or subtract, let him be anathema, and certainly, the most foundational doctrine of all, the Gospel can't be edited. You can't edit it by adding to it, nor should you edit it by silence. That's exactly what begins to be seen in this current movement of progressive Christianity.

Here are the five things that mark it out as another gospel because of its disastrous effects in the life of the church. Some I have already mentioned like it has the wrong motivation. It has the wrong mission. It is therefore the wrong message, and therefore, the wrong ministries, but because it has the wrong message, there are five things that begin to be seen in a ministry, in a preacher or in a church that is embracing progressive Christianity.

Number one, is a denial of the functional supremacy of God's Word in faith and practice. Here is how you see it. Instead of defining the terms of Christianity from the Word of God, they'll be defining it from psychology and therapy language. That's what you'll begin to hear. There will be the therapeutic interpretation of the gospel. The supremacy of God's Word in matters of faith and doctrine begins to be lost. Now, how is it lost in liberal Christianity? They denied the inherency of God's Word. That is such a stupid thing. How can a modern person believe that a book written over 1,600 years, 40 plus human authors could be inherent? So, they jettisoned the inherency of the Word to be accepted by the culture. Progressive Christianity is slightly differing in that you don't hear calls to get rid of the virgin birth and all of that. What they denied is not the inherency of God's Word, but the sufficiency of God's Word.

II Timothy 3:16–17 says *[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* All I need to know God and make Him known in life, is given to me in the special revelation of His Word. It is sufficient, and when God finished it, the last author said, "Do not add or subtract" (Revelation 22:18–19). God's Word is sufficient, but what you begin to see is a denial of the sufficiency of God's Word. Why? Well, I could take you to website after website of evangelical pastors and even within my own denomination where extra Biblical books that come from anti-Christian philosophies are recommended for reading and training and discipleship. I'm going to go into some of them in the next study, whether it's the Revoice issue or the critical theories issue. The Hegelian dialectic gets downloaded in Marxism.

Those things that are designed to destroy Christianity are actually being propelled into Christianity. It comes like this, "These are just valuable, good for analysis, good for helps. You

can eat the meat and spit out the bones.” First of all, I agree. There are some philosophies that in God's common grace the philosopher who's an unbeliever got some stuff right. Paul quoted from the stoics and the Epicureans when they got something right. Now, my daddy didn't use ideas like common grace. He just said, "Well, blind pig finds an acorn every once in a while," and that's what happens. But when you get a document that is drawn from a philosophy that is anti-Christian, that's not a bony fish that you're trying to eat the meat. Number one is all the meat you need is in the Bible. That's all you need to deal with these issues that are facing us today, whether it's partiality, racism, a Biblical understanding of equity or a Biblical understanding of equality.

Everything you need is in the Bible but progressive Christianity says, "No, we have to have this for if you don't have this, then you're not loving, you're not feeling, and you're not properly equipped.” When you're trying to draw from something that's designed to destroy you, that's like thinking, "I'm going to drink poison and somehow I'll get the goodie out of it." Let me give you a better illustration. A man is in the ocean, on a raft. He's dying of thirst, and there is the ocean, but he knows not to drink the seawater, why? It will kill you. So what if he says, "I'm going to drink the seawater and spit out the salt." The seawater isn't made to spit out the salt. You can't spit out the salt. The things you are imbibing are killing Biblical Christianity, not an asset to it. When you deny the sufficiency of the Scripture, then what you've done is you've now exposed yourself to the philosophies of this age, and this present darkness that is coming from it. When people begin to deny the sufficiency of Scripture, they continue to use Biblical terms, but define them with worldly philosophies.

A man called me the other day and asked me to give them some names of some pastors because they were looking for a church to attend. I told him I would pray about it for him and get back with him and then he said, "Well, as you pray about it, just let me tell you something. Don't send us one of those missional guys. Those missional guys, they're progressive." Then I said, "Wait, wait, hold it." The word missional is not a bad word. It comes from the word mission. That's not a bad word. Missional means a lifestyle of total commitment to achieve the mission. The only time missional becomes a problem is when you have the wrong mission. I want to be missional. I want to have a lifestyle committed to making disciples of all the nations. I want it to affect the way I do everything in life. Here's the problem. When the sufficiency of Scripture is abandoned, the progressive Christianity uses the same vocabulary, the same glossary, but a different dictionary. That's why you have to add, "Now, what do you actually mean by that?" You have to ask those questions because they're not working from the same dictionary, and that is the authoritative Word of God that defines everything that we believe and what we ought to believe.

You begin to find concoctions, and I will get into one in the next study that has to do with Revoice. How do we minister to those who are engaged? How do we minister to those who are engaged in sexual addictions of anarchy and perversity? How do you do that with the embedded dynamics that take place with that? Side A tells us, "The church has gotten this wrong. As long as they're committed, it doesn't matter.” Side B says, “We don't say God made them that way like the side A, but we believe that when you're born with a sin nature, some people have a sin nature that disposes them to same sex orientation.” I'm thinking as I read the Bible, "Where in the Bible does it say that people get designed sin natures?" Does that mean someone will kill people because they have a homicidal sin nature or they engage in pornography because they have a pornography sin nature? No. We have a sin nature. We're at rebellion against God. We're dead in our sins, and then we began to work it out in the context of where we've been raised and what we're doing through the decisions that we make.

When you give up the Bible and go to psychology, now you start coming with terms that the Bible doesn't even recognize such as sexual minorities or same sex orientation. Those are terms that come out of categories that have been invented by worldly philosophies and we're trying to import them into the Bible because we don't think the Bible is sufficient and the Gospel itself is not sufficient.

Secondly, in progressive Christianity remember, with the sufficiency of Scripture reduced, what becomes paramount? Belonging, not believing, not what you believe, but do you belong and for people to belong, it's okay to compromise what they should believe. You'll hear disdain like, "You mean you're a part of a church that you got to believe the right thing to be a member of that church?" Yes, it's called the Gospel. It's called believing Jesus, who He is and how He's revealed Himself, yes, and it's called surrendering to the whole council of God, the Word of God. Our belonging is related to our believing, but believing doesn't just put us in a place where we happen to believe the right propositional truths, but now we have a relationship with God and our relationship with God through Christ brings us into relationships with others that are being led by that Gospel. In progressive Christianity, it's not, do people believe in the Christ revealed in the Word of God as the Savior of sinners, it becomes their acceptance no matter what they believe. We can accept people without accepting sin and without accepting theological error. That's a myth that if you love someone and accept someone in a relationship, then you have to accept what they do and what they believe.

Number three, confessional boundaries are removed. Now, here's how they're being removed. In liberal Christianity, they just removed the statements they didn't want, "Take that virgin birth out. Take that resurrection out. Take that atoning death out. Take all that stuff out. We will never get a seat at the table of the culture if we believe that." In this culture, we're not quite there. Although, we're almost there. You'll hear progressive churches say this, "We have to do away with this cross thing. Why would we expect the 21st century young people to believe, trust and love a God who is guilty of child abuse of his own Son?" That comes from progressive pulpits that I am quoting to you, that the death of the Son of God on the cross was divine abuse of the Father upon His Son.

I was in a debate recently where that was brought to me. My answer was, "Oh, my goodness! Will you forgive me? It's clear I haven't explained something to you. Jesus didn't go die an abused death or a martyr's death. Jesus was sent by the Father and He willingly went to the cross to bear our sins and it was an atoning death, and there is your hope in Christ." This whole notion of confessional boundaries will start with the Gospel. The Gospel gets adulterated, and how is it adulterated? Here is a whole movement to help people in sexual addictions, and what do we tell them? You can come to Christ, be justified and be adopted, but don't let people tell you that the power of sin has been broken in your life. It's a half gospel in the ministry of progressive churches. Here's the Gospel blessings that are declarative – right with God, justification, adoption – but they actually don't believe in the power of regeneration that the dominion of sin has been broken, and you don't have to sin. It comes with statements like this; "Quit telling people to pray the gay away." That statement is so blasphemous against the Divinely ordained means of grace. This reveals that they don't actually believe that the power of sin is broken in the life of those who are converted.

Not only is regeneration set aside, but also sanctification. Sanctification is declared; "Well, that just doesn't happen." I have heard bold statements right within my own denomination that people with deeply embedded sexual sins don't have any hope of being free from them in this life, and that the sexual desires of promiscuity and sexual desires of anarchy are not sin. It's

only sin if they're acted out, but the Bible is clear that the lust and the desire is sin. When people begin to abandon the Word of God and the Gospel, the confessional boundaries are erased because the church won't engage in church discipline. There are three marks to the church. The church is marked by preaching, prayer, and the Word, marked by the sacraments, and marked by discipline. Now, normally, discipline is positive. That's what we call discipleship, but sometimes when people are teaching errors, you have to discipline them. You have to set aside their credentials and their teaching ministry. If the church does not enact discipline upon false teachers, it's done away with its confession. You might as well not have it if you don't properly apply it to those who teach and preach. So, there is the laws of sufficiency of Scripture, the erasing of what is believed in order to affirm belonging, then the confessional boundaries are undermined and adulterated, which eventually leads to apostasy.

Number four, is contextualization becomes the governing principle of the Christian life. Got to be in the world, but somebody forgot to say this last part, but not of the world. In today's church, we actually think that we're going to bring people to Christ by how much like we are the world. When the Bible says, "It's when we humbly display that Jesus makes a difference" that's what draws people to hear the Gospel, and that's what affirms the testimony of the Gospel. Because of contextualization and you don't want to offend people because the culture isn't there, you'll hear sermons and rightly so on racism if they're Biblically dealing with racism, rightly so on sex trafficking if they're Biblically dealing with that, rightly so on humility if we're Biblically defining that, rightly so on justice, rightly so on the welfare of the city if you're Biblically defining what is the welfare of the city, rightly so on all those things, but the pulpits of progressive churches will be silent on gender, on the sanctity of sexuality, on the sanctity of marriage, on the sanctity of life because the culture won't applaud that. So now, the culture controls the pulpit, which means that culture is conforming the pew to the culture.

Romans 12:2 says [2] *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* How does your mind get renewed? It is through preaching that is faithful to God's Word, that's done lovingly, but with conviction, but when we bow to contextualization your mind will not get renewed. Here is the way I understand contextualization and I don't use Contextualization to interpret the Bible. When I try to preach, my job isn't to get the Bible to you in this century. My job is to get you back to the century where the Bible was written, then apply it to life today. You need to understand it in the context it was written, not reinterpret it for the context of today. Understand it in the context it was written was called historical, grammatical interpretation of the Bible that's focused upon Christ and then apply that today – this is what it means now. Contextualization is speaking to the culture in the terms the culture can understand. Contextualization is not speaking on the terms the culture demands. Contextualization is speaking the truth of God's Word to the culture in the terms it can understand. That does not mean that we speak only the terms that the culture allows.

Fifthly and finally, there will be an abandonment of the means of grace. My heart just broke this last week. A very promising young man that I knew in the ministry, basically, has left the ministry and I quote him, "I believe to be a faithful minister of the Gospel, I need to become a community organizer." I actually believe if we're doing our job, we're going to have to disciple some people that become community organizers, but that's not the sacred call. What this reveals is, a denigration and despising of the primacy of preaching, the priority of prayer, and the means of grace. We just don't really believe that it does what God says He does with it, that it's through the foolishness of preaching that we are being saved (I Corinthians 1:21). I do believe it's an

indicator when the churches of today put a plexiglass lectern in the place of a pulpit, where preaching is a utilitarian thing. We may or may not make room for it. There's not even an architectural statement of substance that they believe that it's through the preaching of the Word that men and women come to Christ. Faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17), and the call to intercessory prayer, and the blessings of prayer and the Word.

This is why the apostles said, "We must not neglect prayer and the word" (Acts 6:4). The early church from which the world was turned upside down in Jerusalem was conceived in a prayer meeting, Acts 1. It was birthed in a sermon, Acts 2, prayer and Word. Those are the marks I wanted to lay out for you and in the next study I want to take on some of these extra Biblical literature that's now replacing the sufficiency of Scripture. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Father for Jesus, our Redeemer, the Lord of glory. Thank You that He has promised to build His church. Would You please allow us to stay on mission, on message, and in ministry? I realize that progressive Christianity just like liberal Christianity does have wolves in sheep's clothing, but I also realize that there are some who the issues have attracted them. The siren call of the world's wisdom has captured their minds. There are some who are sheep in wolves' clothing. I pray that You would help us win them even as Paul won Peter when Peter began to depart for another gospel. Help us to be faithful, Jesus, to Your Word, to our mission, to our message, to our ministry, and then, Father, transform sinners throughout this world as salt and light, that we may see the praise of our God. Cover the Earth as the waters cover the sea, and the Gospel move forward in power. The world calls for wokeness. We ask for the awakening. Awake, O sleeper, and rise up. May the Gospel give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to follow in Jesus' name. Amen.