

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

FELLOWSHIP AND ERROR

(Part 1)

David P. Brown

INTRODUCTION

In considering the totality of the truth concerning unity and division among God's people, we learn that there is a unity or fellowship that is acceptable (authorized in the New Testament). However, there is a unity or fellowship that is anathema with God (not authorized in the New Testament). The same is true regarding division. If we do not know how to rightly divide the Word of Truth, we cannot know which fellowship or division is wrong (not authorized) and which ones are right (authorized) (John 17:17-21; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 2 The. 2:5-16; Rev. 2:2, 14-15, 20). Hence, God has a law of inclusion and a law of exclusion. We must learn them and abide by them. If we do not, we could be found in fellowship with those who are out of fellowship with God and out of fellowship with those who are in fellowship with Him.

GOD'S LAW OF INCLUSION

God's law of inclusion is found in the plan of salvation. That plan is derived from a study of the totality of the New Testament's teaching regarding how and when one is saved by God from his sins. From the evidence that is contained in the Word of Truth one is led to faith in Christ (Rom. 10:17). The believer in Christ is next instructed to repent of his sins (Acts 17:30). Having repented of his sins the penitent believer is now authorized to confess his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10). The next step is baptism. It is the final step one takes to become a Christian (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). This is

the definitive obedient step. This is the case because it is the step whereby one comes into fellowship with God and all others who have been scripturally baptized into Christ in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins (Mat. 28:18-19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:26-27; Heb. 5:9). As members of the Lord's church to which He adds all whom He saves (Acts 2:47), we cannot remain faithful to the Lord and not honor His law of inclusion. Thereby and only thereby are men brought into fellowship with God.

The Lord's church (God's family) is not allowed (not authorized by Christ in the New Testament) to fellowship or be united with those who refuse to submit to God's law of inclusion. Hence, fellowship with God precedes fellowship with man. Those out of fellowship with God may not be fellowshipped by those who are in fellowship with Him. Today, the New Testament distinction between the Lord's one true church and human religions, especially the denominations, is being set aside by those who have no or very little respect for Bible authority. However, it continues to be the case that Christians are to **"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"** (Eph. 5:11).

GOD'S LAW OF EXCLUSION

When the doctrines and/or practices (violation of obligatory matters) of a member of the Lord's church endanger his or her soul and/or unscripturally endanger the souls of other members, then he or she is a scriptural subject for proper corrective discipline as taught in the

Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher
dpbcftf@gmail.com

COMMUNICATIONS received by CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH and/or its Editor are viewed as intended FOR PUBLICATION unless otherwise stated. Whereas we respect confidential information, so described, everything else sent to us we are free to publish without further permission being necessary. Anything sent to us NOT for publication, please indicate this clearly when you write. Please address such letters directly to the Editor David P. Brown, 25403 Lancewood Dr. 77373 or dpbcftf@gmail.com. Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE

To receive CFTF free, go to www.cftfpaper.com and sign up. Once done, you will be notified when the current issue is available. It will be in the form of a PDF document that can be printed, and forwarded to friends.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES
FOR THE PAPER EDITION
Single Print Subs:**

One Year, \$25.00; Two Years, \$45.00

**NO REFUNDS FOR CANCELLATIONS OF
PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS**

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH exists to defend the gospel (Philippians 1:7,17) and refute error (Jude 3). Therefore, we will not knowingly print anything to the contrary.

**CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH
25403 Lancewood Dr., Spring, Texas 77373
Telephone: (281) 350-5516**

**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001**

New Testament. If after such discipline has been applied correctly, and the unruly member refuses to repent, then he or she must be excluded from the fellowship of all faithful children of God (Mat. 18:15-17; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:2-13; Eph. 5:6, 11-12; 2 The. 3:6-15; Tit. 3:10-11; 2 John 9-11). Those who are in fellowship with God (faithful members of the church of Christ) may not remain faithful to God and all other faithful members of the Lord's church and not faithfully practice God's law of exclusion. With these two important laws of God in mind let us continue our study of fellowship and error.

No faithful child of God desires to be in error on anything, certainly in matters religious. The tremendous emphasis in the Scriptures on the obligation of one to be right with God, as the rightly divided Word of Truth defines the right, permeates the very fiber of a Christian's being (John 8:31-32; 12:48; 1 The. 5:21; 2 John 8-11). Yet, in reality, most of us are wrong on at least some things, including some things in the religious realm—yes, even biblical matters. But, if we go through death's door having violated even one biblically obligatory matter for which we have not received forgiveness, we will be sentenced to hell when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ (John 12:48; Acts 2:42; Rom. 14:10; Col. 3:17; 1 John 1:7-8; 2 John 8-11). Thus, a part of rightly dividing the Word of Truth is knowing how to recognize the difference in obligatory matters and non-obligatory matters in the authoritative Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15).

It seems that too few brethren (certain preachers and elders may be included in this category) have no concept of this aspect of ascertaining Bible authority. Hence, fellowship is broken between brethren when such should not be the case (over non-obligatory, non-fatal error). On the other hand, due to a complete lack of respect for any kind of Bible authority, other brethren seek to fellowship anyone that can say that Jesus is his Savior. Hence, they are willing to extend to and remain in fellowship with persons who are in violation of obligatory matters set out in the Word of God. Neither position is authorized by the Bible. Each position, therefore, is a violation of at least one obligatory matter and, therefore, constitutes fatal error. One position makes obligatory what God does not, and the other position looses men from what God obligates them to do.

The following account is an example of this ignorance mentioned in the previous paragraph. I was exposed recently to some preachers who were pronouncing certain other brethren to be false teachers. When they were asked if these persons whom they had labeled as false teachers were going to hell because of

their teaching, these particular preachers just could not bring themselves to declare that those whom they had labeled to be false teachers were going to hell because of their alleged error.

May it be well understood at this early stage in this article that any one who is a false teacher according to the New Testament definition of a false teacher (one guilty of omission or commission regarding obligatory matters in the New Testament—fatal error) is headed as straight to hell as is Satan himself. To therefore affirm that someone is a false teacher is to imply that such a person is hell-bound. If such previously mentioned preachers had a correct understanding (assuming that they are not cowards at heart) of that which is obligatory and that which is optional as well as how to tell the difference between the two, they would understand what fatal and non-fatal error is. This is especially interesting when one of these preachers (one of the younger ones) exposed his ignorance by confessing that he had never heard of such a term as “fatal error.” Moreover, these aforementioned fellows and others of their kin should know that one is not authorized by the New Testament to call a person a false teacher unless that person is teaching a doctrine that will cause him and others who believe it to go to hell. Moreover, they should be able to **prove** it (1 The. 5:21). It has been my experience that most of these fellows have not the slightest idea of what is involved in proving their charges. Again, this evidences a woeful lack of knowledge on the part of one whose principle business is to direct persons to and in the pathways of righteousness.

It is, therefore, my goal of this article to set out the biblical principles that allow for one to determine in the Word of God what is obligatory and what is not, as well as what is optional and what is not. A doctrine that causes one to omit an obligation to God pertaining to becoming a Christian or living the Christian life is a doctrine that is “fatal error.” It is identified as “fatal error” because its belief and practice stop one (by omission or commission) from doing **only** what God has authorized and **all** that He has obligated him to do.

“UNITY IN DIVERSITY”

Liberals (those who teach doctrines that loose men from what God in the Bible has bound—obligatory matters—on them) see the various and sundry errors extant in the body of Christ. They make little or no distinction between errors regarding obligatory or non-obligatory matters. They falsely conclude that since errors exist in the church, we are in error when we expose the errors of the brethren. Of course, such persons do not

desire for the errors of our religious neighbors to be exposed either. Hence, in matters of obligation to God (which matters they know not how to determine and in some cases they do not care enough about God’s authority to see the need of determining it), they declare the erroneous doctrine of “unity in diversity.” This they do without any consideration for the difference between obligatory or non-obligatory matters. “Unity in diversity” simply defined is a doctrine that teaches that men may believe contrary to each other regarding obligatory matters, yet remain in fellowship with God and one another.

Such persons as previously mentioned seek to find grounds for unity and fellowship with God and one another on some basis other than the standard that requires discharging one’s obligations to God, which obligations are located only in God’s Word. Hence, according to their twisted logic, law becomes antagonistic to grace and love. In this false scheme, love ceases to motivate one to obey God’s Word. It becomes an emotional subjective feeling that allows for everything but obedience to God’s Word to be saved. Having thereby rejected any association of grace and law, they teach that God’s grace is extended to man without law. Therefore, it is alleged by these persons that no one can know who is saved or not saved, except God Himself. Hence, for them there is no law of inclusion or exclusion. However, the Bible teaches that God’s love caused God to shed His grace (His favor that no sinner deserves or can merit) on man and that God’s grace is extended to man through His commandments (Psa. 119:172; Rom. 5:21; Tit. 2:10-12). Therefore, the gospel of Christ is God’s saving power (Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Thus, those who refuse to discharge their obligations to God regarding becoming a Christian (God’s law of inclusion) will be sentenced to hell on the day of Judgment (2 The. 1:8; Rom. 6:17-18; Heb. 5:9).

Furthermore, to the persons noted in the last paragraph, the Bible becomes a meaningless book as far as it being an instruction book in righteous living. Some of these fellows have gone so far as to label the Bible a “love letter,” though the Bible declares that it is an instruction book in righteousness (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; Jam. 1:25; John 12:48). Moreover, Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Therefore, any concept of love that does not require a person to discharge his obligations to God as they are set out in God’s Word is a false concept of love. With no absolute objective standard of conduct, such characters tolerate anyone practicing just about anything. However, they do not tolerate those of us who direct them to the Law of God and obedience to the

Contending For The Faith
25403 Lancewood Dr.
Spring, Texas 77373

same (Isa. 8:20; John 14:15; Heb. 5:10).

In the warped thinking of the previously mentioned persons, law becomes a bad word. They are, therefore, moved to seek another standard for unity and fellowship other than the absolute objective standard that is the rightly divided Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Because such persons are unlearned in how to ascertain Bible authority (whether it is willful ignorance or otherwise) they have nothing but their own opinions (their own subjective likes, dislikes, whims, notions, and feelings) to rely on in determining what they will and will not embrace in matters religious.

These *losers* teach doctrines that cut the whole church loose from all her New Testament identifying marks. Thereby, the church, in time, ceases any and all relationship to the church that Jesus built (Mat. 16:18), that He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), to which Christ adds all the saved (Acts 2:47), and is revealed in her fullness only on the pages of the New Testament. Simply stated, such persons cause the church to go into oblivion. Examples of liberalism's product are the humanly devised Independent Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ.

Of course, this is also the case with those who bind on men what God in His Word has not bound. They, too, are

determined to make their likes and dislikes into God's Law. These *binders* usually do their binding, where God has not bound, on a few doctrinal points. By their human legislation they prohibit the church from being and doing all that God meant her to be able to do. Simply stated, such persons choke the church down. Those who are "anti" (against)—orphan homes, cooperation between churches, helping non-saints out of the church treasury, kitchens in the church buildings, multiple containers for the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper, "located preachers," Bible classes, and women teachers are examples of optional views that have been pressed to the division of the church.

"The losers" and "the binders," as herein defined, are anathema with God. Such is the case because each view is not content to keep and uphold only what the Word of God obligates one to do (Col. 3:17). Thereby, the one gospel (God's only power to save man from sin) is altered, and "**another gospel**," a gospel of a different kind, is preached and practiced regarding God's laws of inclusion and exclusion to the destruction of the proclaimer and hearer alike (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:6-9).

****Article Will Continue In June Issue****