

Canadian Christian Heritage Under Fire #4 - New Evangelicalism Denounced

by Ian Goligher

The sermon warns of the dangers of New Evangelicalism, which compromises with worldliness, lacks doctrine, and promotes subjectivism, leading to a loss of truth and a compromised faith.

Duration: 45:50

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:15, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 22:37-39, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Ephesians 4:14-15, Colossians 2:8, 2 John 1:10-11

Topics: "Evangelicalism", "Biblical Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses various aspects of the modern evangelical movement and its impact on the church. He emphasizes the importance of not being slack in serving the Lord and acknowledges that many times we have failed in this regard. The preacher also highlights the decline of the gospel and gospel people in Canada and encourages believers to examine their own experiences of Christ and understanding of God. He further criticizes the trend of reducing Bible studies to mere discussion groups, where multiple opinions and interpretations of scripture are allowed. The sermon concludes with a call to remain steadfast in the battle for truth and to be aware of the hindrances to evangelism caused by situational ethics and the loss of truth in modern thinking. The preacher affirms the importance of holding onto the unchanging and fixed truth of God's Word and the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Over these last weeks we've been considering Canada as a mosaic. We have drawn a little difference between our cousins to the south, where America is spoken of the land of the melting pot, and the American dream, not true in every case of course, but is one people under God. Canada is known as a mosaic, a people who live together but for the most part maintain their own identities, their own culture, many their own religion, and of course just about everybody has their own opinion.

We have also gone on to look at Evangelicalism and how much of that spirit, that same individualistic spirit has crept into the Evangelical church today, and we have called the Evangelical church the mosaic of notions. A little bit of this, a little bit of that, it's like a smorgasbord, where as an Evangelical you can almost pick and choose a little bit of what you like and leave all the rest. Well our subject this evening is

how do we face the compromise in the Evangelical church, and how do we react and respond to all the pressures that we face, and I might say the loneliness that we will face, when we are not prepared to swim along in the current of modern day new Evangelicalism in this country.

Now to help us, and I trust as a guide to give us some discernment on this, I want to give about five pointers of the kind of church, the kind of attitude that we are speaking about. The church that compromises with worldliness. Now they say that they believe all the essential doctrines of the gospel.

They would believe the Bible, believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus, believe in very much the fundamentals of the faith. But if you go into the church, you will find by dress, by worship, by style of worship, that so much of the world has come in and has been made agreeable to the very standards of Christianity. It's the kind of church that we've described that is a mile wide, but only an inch deep.

Very shallow. A whole lot of everything, but not much of anything. Then there is secondly, a lack of doctrine.

A lack of definitive doctrine. The new kind of church can sometimes be told in its presentation of the truth. It's not any longer the exposition, but it's the storytelling.

And in the singing and praise, there are the old hymnology is passé, those hymns that are meant to teach. Hymns that are meant to really sink into our being and enable us to worship God in spirit and truth. Along with this, and I would call this pointer number three, is subjectiveism.

It has reduced almost all evidence of conversion and Christianity to how a person feels. And it has brought about a kind of religious service and a religious experience under the banner of evangelicalism of making people feel good about themselves. Of course, there's some of psychology in that, but the test of a person's Christianity is their emotional position and their emotional state.

And rather than the litmus test of the Bible, it is more on experience, individual experience. And of course, as you know, everybody's experience may differ. And there is no test of whose is right and whose is wrong, because it is not brought back to the touchstone of the Bible.

The kind of church that I'm speaking about tonight and the kind of attitude I'm speaking about is a church where people attend in droves but with no Bible in hand. The Bible is not really taken seriously, and no doubt such pastors or worship leaders are interesting, very skillful in entertaining people, storytellers, they are artists, and very often people so enjoy that emphasis which they call worship. Of course, hand in hand with that, there is very little emphasis on creeds or confessions or a catechism.

In fact, in many of these evangelical churches, they have deliberately avoided definitive creeds or confessions. And again, the New Evangelical reduces religion to your experience. What is your experience of Christ, of the gospel, and your own understanding of God? Another marker, these are just pointers, I'm not saying that they totally sum up the New Evangelical attitude, but they're very often those characteristics that you will discover.

Another is, their Bible studies are very often reduced to discussion groups, where the discussion leader is not a preacher, and he is not even a teacher, but he is merely the monitor of the discussion group. And people get around, yes, with their Bibles and their allotted portions, and they discuss what they have read and what they have thought about it, and it usually goes around in a circle and is asked, what did you think about that passage? And that person says, well, I got this. And the next person says, well, I got this.

And you could have, in a small discussion group, ten sets of opinions, ten views of that very same passage, and, of course, the monitor who's leading the discussion will not say, well, you're wrong and this person's right and that person is on the way to truth, but not yet there, but rather, very often, it is left open-ended because truth to the New Evangelical is not fixed. It is subjective. It is the Bible speaking to you individually as you read it and as you are led through that passage.

Now, this is very different from old-fashioned orthodoxy. Christianity in its biblical, orthodox, old-fashioned manner in Canada today is in the minority. If you were to visit from church to church in Greater Vancouver to find a church that is old-fashioned, mainline orthodox, avoiding these marks that we have just noted, you're going to be hard-pressed to find such a church.

And if you do, others will probably consider that church to be passé, old-fashioned. They're the old fogies, and the average age is usually the grey-headed group. It's dying out.

And that old-fashioned orthodoxy is usually considered not the way to build a church today. Now, by old-fashioned, and I say this not so much for those that are in the meeting tonight but for anyone that might be listening to this by tape or perhaps by radio one day, by old-fashioned, we do not mean a congregation of people that dress in black clothes, where the women sit on one side of the church and the men in the other, where there's the reek of either candle grease or lamp oil because we're so old-fashioned that we don't believe in using electricity. Some people think that's what we mean when we talk about being an old-fashioned, orthodox, mainline, biblical church.

But rather by old-fashioned we mean reverence, doctrine, discipline, where there is the dispensing of the ordinances of the church and the calling of a people to a serious, godly, holy lifestyle. And we mean preaching. That doesn't go around asking every man for his opinion, but preaching, where the word of God is heralded boldly, where the issues of eternity, heaven and hell, and the issues of the soul are dealt with in the light of the judgment day.

That's what we mean by an old-fashioned, biblical, orthodox church. Now, in Canada today there is a rising generation that hardly knows what it is to attend in and worship in an orthodox, Bible-believing church. They are today, because the popular churches of today are the community, subjective, discussion group style type of evangelicalism.

Now, I have deliberately sought to set this picture before you because this trend is not for naught. There is a reason why there is a proliferation of this kind of new evangelical church in Canada today. And what has happened in this nation is that orthodoxy has been supplanted.

A new way, a new philosophy, a new ideology has crept in. The seeds of it have been sown in the seminaries. Young preachers have come forth and they have gone into churches and pulpits and they have changed the old orthodox church to the new evangelical, weak, compromised style.

That is why tonight I want us to read and to consider this parable of the wheat and the tares. I want you to notice in the verse 25 of Matthew 13 that we are told in this parable of our Lord, But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. And that very well describes the sowing of tares of new orthodoxy.

And there is a term for this, it's called neo-orthodoxy or new orthodoxy. This sowing of the tares has been going on for quite a number of years in many evangelical circles and seminaries, and we today are

reaping the fruit of it. And that is why there is a generation growing up in our nation that look upon an old-fashioned orthodox biblical church as a bunch of weirdos.

People that have forgotten to move with the trend, and the tragedy is that there's a generation that doesn't even know what biblical ministry and Christian standards really are. And so this story, which is very familiar to you I know, this story we can use tonight to ring the alarm that we must no longer sleep while the enemy sows his tares. This congregation and any biblical church that remains in Canada dare no longer sleep while the tares of new evangelicalism are being sown all around us.

We need to awaken firstly to the loss of truth. As these workmen in the field went about their daily tasks and began to recognize the tares that were in the midst of the wheat, they soon realized that the wheat was not nearly as pure as they thought. And while those plants were young and tender in their budding stage, they looked very, very like the wheat plants.

And it wasn't until they grew somewhat that their real character was recognized. And now there was a problem. And in verse 27, these workmen, they go to the husbandman and they ask, Did thou not sow good seed in thy field? And this is the issue that is with us in evangelicalism in Canada today.

How did gospel churches, how did men who said they were preaching the gospel end up with tares compromising the truth? The answer is that an enemy has done this. And while men slept, while churches had their guard down, while seminaries allowed the enemy to come in and sow the evil tares of neo-orthodoxy, the truth has been lost to a great degree. Now the father of neo-orthodoxy is a man called Karl Barth or Bart as he may have been pronounced in the German.

This man was born in 1886 and lived until 1968. He was a Swiss theologian. At first he sat under the liberals and German higher critics and imbibed all their ways of ungodly teaching.

But he rebounded. And he had a reaction to the awful attacks that were made upon the Bible. And many looked upon this man Karl Barth as the hope of the evangelical to stand up to the pressures of liberalism.

Karl Barth himself professed that he would bring evangelicals back to biblical Christianity. But he did anything but. He brought evangelicals into a quagmire of compromise in his system of existentialism.

He taught that all the Bible was not the inspired Word of God, but that only parts of it contained the Word of God. Now the old liberal, he wouldn't even allow that. The old liberal would have said, the Bible is just a human production.

But Karl Barth, he was sort of a halfway two from the liberal to true orthodoxy and saying, well the Bible in parts is inspired and at times as you read it is inspired. And many followed that halfway two position. That led amongst seminaries, Bible teachers and evangelicals to a soft approach to those areas where many said the Bible had nothing to say about creation, geology and science.

And only when you're talking about salvation can you appeal to the Bible. And you will probably know that in many evangelical churches today that they are either theistic evolutionists, progressive evolutionists, or they at the very least deny the literal six days of creation. Now Karl Barth promoted all of this by his brand of existentialism.

Now I must admit that my little soft brain has a difficulty in understanding these kind of terms because I don't claim to be a philosopher. I don't claim to be steeped in all the thinking of these so-called

philosophers. But if I could put it this way, if orthodoxy is a brick, square, firm, concrete, measurable, existentialism is Plato.

It's malleable. You can make any shape out of it you want. You can press it into a square shape, a round shape, a triangular shape, an oblong shape, anything you want.

Orthodoxy is fixed. It is revealed truth based on the statements of the Bible, God said it, I believe it, and dare any man to change it. Existentialism is truth is not fixed, truth is pliable, and according to your situation, and out of that comes situational ethics, according to your situation, according to your culture, according to the day and age in which you live, you can apply the truth, you can manipulate the truth any way you wish and still be an evangelical or a new evangelical.

Now you can understand that from that kind of thinking, as it seeped into the brains of Bible teachers and seminarians, that there was immediately a great loss of truth. Orthodoxy stands upon finished, final, spoken revelation. That's the gospel that we have.

That's the God whom we serve because the word of God comes out of God's heart. He's the I am that I am, the unchanging, holy, righteous God whose truth is fixed. The Lord Jesus came into the world to save lost men, to reconcile them to God.

And the plan of salvation is a set plan, it's a fixed plan, it's a plan that man has no ability to tamper with. The atonement and the suffering of the cross were all necessary to satisfy the broken law of God. But with existentialism, Barthianism, neo-evangelicalism, those fixed truths are lost or are in danger of being lost at the very least.

And the guard is down and the enemy comes in with his tears to sow these evil seeds. And we as a church need to awaken that the enemy is fast at work. And when you get to the passage in Matthew where our Lord Jesus expounds this parable, he says that the enemy is the devil.

And always remember that the devil is the enemy of the gospel. There's a battle for the truth of the gospel and we better not go to sleep. The youth of this church is in danger.

There are some gray heads here and if Karl Barth walked into your life, you wouldn't move from the gospel for a moment. There is a young generation growing up and the truths of Karl Barth and the neo-evangelicalism would ruin them. And there's always the tug of taking people away from that old-fashioned, reverent, doctrinal, solid foundation style of worship to the anything goes.

And we'll call it the Plato religion. The Plato religion. It's the enemy's work.

Secondly, we need to awaken to the causes of confusion. No doubt these workers in the fields, they faced the confusion because at first they didn't recognize these tares. And they were told by the husband man to leave them alone until the harvest.

And so all their days of that growing season, there was confusion in that harvest field. Purity was lost. Truth was lost.

Deception had done its work. And those workers had to all their days, that harvest, put up with this mixture of wheat and tares. And so when these subtle differences are brought into the church today, they are likewise not recognized.

And they bring confusion. And there are those who may even be the Lord's people, and they're carried away by them. And they stumble at them.

There was a time in Canada, in the Western world, when religion polarized as it may have been. At least you knew who was who. A Baptist was a Baptist.

A Protestant was a Protestant. A Roman Catholic was a Roman Catholic. A Mennonite was a Mennonite.

And they knew who they were. They knew what they stood for. But not so much anymore.

There is now this deep-seated confusion. Distinctiveness is lost. And truth is lost.

And confusion comes into the ranks. Now this neo-orthodoxy sowed its tares in many denominations. Let's realize this, that this philosophy of existentialism, the Plato religion, came into seminary after seminary, in denomination after denomination.

And I have two quotes in articles that I want to read to you on this widespread confusion. And it answered a few things for me when I discovered this. And I think it'll answer a few things for you too.

Let me read this. In the recent 22nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, neo-orthodoxy resurfaced as a problem for the PCA. Probably many members thought they had left neo-orthodoxy behind for good when they left the mainline Presbyterian organizations.

Not so. For the PCA made the mistake of entering into ecumenical relations on the left. In particular, it has had a sister church relationship with the Christian Reformed Church, which has allowed neo-orthodox influences to grow for decades, and is now coming under control of the neo-orthodox wing.

Now for your information, the Presbyterian Church of America is a relatively new denomination in North America. It's set out to be an evangelical, conservative, and for the most part, reformed movement. But as they are strung across this continent today, you could go to one church and you wouldn't be sure if you're in a charismatic church.

You could go to another and you could find that they are reasonably conservative. But this, the seeds, the tears of neo-orthodoxy have troubled that church as well. The article goes on to say, the problem of neo-orthodoxy extends far beyond the reformed churches, however.

It is making a reappearance with enhanced subtlety and sophistication in all evangelical fellowships where it is not being vigorously resisted. Most evangelical leaders have lost the will to fight such heresies. Many people say there's no point.

This thinking is now so insipient, it is so endemic, that there's no way to win the war. On Barthianism and Neo-Orthodoxy. Now this next quote I'm going to read to you, answered something that I've never understood in all the years that I've been in Canada.

And that is regarding the Mennonite churches. Now the Mennonite churches, as you know, they started off in Holland. They were of the Anabaptist type.

They, due to persecution, went to Russia. And again, due to persecution, were driven out. And many of them came as pioneers to this country, and they brought with them their own version of what we would call sound orthodox Christianity.

And for a reformed believer, that's a very generous statement, but that's another matter. We would accept them as a Bible-believing evangelical church. But have you ever noticed, certainly in Canada, that the Mennonites are as liberal as any other church that you can think of in this country? And how can that be with the history of defending the faith, persecution for the faith? The answer is the tears of Neo-Orthodoxy.

Now I want to read this to you. Barth's work has influenced, both directly and indirectly, several generations of Mennonite scholars, educators, and pastors. His, that is Barth's influence, helped prepare the way for the emergence of the so-called biblical theology movement in North America, and the continuing interest in biblical realism, which characterizes the writing of Mennonite scholars.

Now you can understand how these things work. These men that are the thinkers, the theologians, philosophers, and they write their scholarly works, they're brought into the seminaries, they're taught as glowing works of new light, and then these young men go out into their pastorates, and they declare them, and the whole matter, mushrooms within a denomination, and indeed within a nation. Now as you look at New Evangelicalism, you'll discover there are three things that mark it.

They work on the basis of infiltration. It's no longer separation. In fact, the New Evangelical hates the word biblical separation.

We've had people that have come to our meetings in this church, and they have come in and enjoyed the meeting, until you start preaching about biblical separation, and they will actually stomp out of the meeting. Or they will attack you at the door. Their ire is raised at the doctrine of biblical separation, which is orthodox, biblical.

But the new thinking today is infiltration. It's coined by a man called Harold Ockengay of Fuller Seminary, that the New Evangelicalism has changed its strategy from one of separation, to one of infiltration. Now that infiltration leads to toleration.

One leads to the next. And instead of separating from those that are in error, you tolerate them. And you allow them to teach and preach in their ways.

Now in the recent meetings on this subject, I have said before you the thing that I can't understand, is institutions that were raised for biblical preaching and teaching, and missionary training, are now seeking higher education, sending their professors, to places like Regent College, that they might receive further education. And of course, it's toleration, infiltration. And then that leads to cooperation.

One leads to the other. And these are the reasons why in the New Evangelical circles today, in practical terms, if you take the ministerial association meetings of pastors and spiritual leaders, even in Surrey or Langley, they are all one. Pentecostal, Baptist, Evangelical free, charismatic.

And it's not the first time that I've been invited to such a pastoral luncheon with the Roman Catholic priest also invited along. I think you will appreciate my response to that invitation. I didn't need to buy lunch that day.

But these are the reasons behind the trends that we see all around us. Now, to put this in a biblical pattern, we have to ask, are we right? We're right on a limb. We're on our own.

Well, not totally on our own by any means. Thank God there are others who fight the battle. There are others who will not join with the New Evangelical trends.

And we praise God for every one of them. But in the scale of things, we're certainly the remnant, the small minority. And if you want to be the big mega church, the popular preacher or popular church today, this is certainly the wrong camp to be in.

Now, the question is, are we right or are we wrong? Is it worth paying the price? Turn with me to 2 John, the book of 2 John, the little epistle of 2 John, verse 10. Now, here are verses, and I'm sure you would have been taught these concerning the cults. You would have been taught these concerning some wild religion.

But in John's day, these things were subtle. If there come any unto you that bring not this doctrine, what are you to do? Tolerate? Cooperate? No, the word of God says, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God's speed. For he that bid him God's speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

We need to awaken to the need to separate from those who are presenting a new style of worship. And I've given you all those attributes at the very beginning of the message of the style, the trends of new evangelicalism, the new style of worship. I didn't even mention the contemporary Christian music, the rock music that is brought into the church, the world that is brought into the church, the de-emphasis of the Bible, the centrality of man, the pluralistic spirit that is given.

And what are we to do? To cooperate? So we are exhorted to not even bid them God's speed, lest we become partaker of their deeds. And so the Bible is explicit. And biblical separation is a Bible doctrine.

It is less popular today than it even was 75 years ago when Dr. T.T. Shields in Toronto was fighting the battle against modernism. And we have to face it as a congregation. And parents, this is the answer you need to your children because they will ask you, why do we attend a church that's so small? My friends go to a church where they have all these facilities and activities.

We are in the battle for truth. We have deliberately decided that we're going to take up our cross and not follow the modern trends but follow our Lord in this battle for truth. Another difficulty we need to awaken to is the hindrances to evangelism.

Just as in the parable where these workers spread their tears everywhere, it made the harvesting work so difficult, so very difficult. They had to put up with those rascal tears the whole season and then at harvest go to work to bundle them and separate them from the wheat. And this new evangelicalism makes our gospel work many times more difficult.

Whether it's easy believism, worldly standards, entertainment, the music of the world in the church, bands, dancing, gimmicky ideas that are brought into the church and they are made to be acceptable and they're called evangelical. And then it makes our task all the more difficult because we have to withstand them and people wonder why we don't follow those kind of trends. Young people, as your pastor tonight, get used to being called old-fashioned.

Do not think of that as a derogatory term but think of it as being loyal to the Lord. It is not the trend of defeat, passé, old-fashioned, gray-headed, weird people. Now the devil will come to you in your teenage years and he will tell you, your mother and father are just going in a narrow-minded attitude and when you grow up you get your freedom and you get a place where you can worship God differently.

If that happens, let me tell you, the tears are already being sown in your heart now and the devil's already seeking to do his work. And when it comes to the music of worship, when it comes to the standards of real,

vital, godly Christianity, which as a teenager you may not fully understand, you may not fully grasp, I trust there will come a day when you will thank God that you were delivered from the follies of compromise and those worldly ways. We must also awaken to the reality that all the tares are headed for judgment in the parable that our Lord told that they were to be left until the end of the harvest, gathered up into bundles and burned.

The new easy-believism of today does not worry about the day of judgment, the day of harvest. The new man-pleasing, compromising evangelical, and I'll name John Stott who is an Anglican, who is on record of denying the eternal punishment of the soul that dies without Christ. And he is looked upon as an evangelical.

Go to a book room today and you'll get the books of John Stott. They are stacked before your eyes. He is named as an evangelical.

He doesn't believe in the judgment of a soul for all eternity. That's fundamental to the teachings of our Lord Jesus and to the Scriptures. And we have to awaken to that.

And of course, we need to awaken to the great work of the harvest that we are about. What happened to the wheat? They were gathered into the barns. And we need to be a church that's not just fighting the tares, but busy gathering in the wheat.

And the greatest answer to the apostasy and the isms of our day is that gospel-preaching churches become centers of evangelism and soul-winning and experiencing the power of God as never before. And the answer to the devil's lie is the power of the truth in our midst. And men and women, we must pray for this.

And honestly, we have to confess that we have greatly lacked it. We ought to, as a band of God's people, be driven to our knees to plead with our God that in this nation He will not allow His church to die. And these isms to flourish and to destroy the very Christian fiber of this nation.

But that God will visit us again in grace and grant to us days of refreshing from on high. Are you a praying Christian tonight? We ought to be. We're in a great battle.

And indeed, we're in a great strait. Humanly speaking, as these trends develop, what we're seeing in the evangelical camp is exactly what happened a hundred years ago whenever the modernism was beginning to do its work in the early part of the 1900s. When men like T.T. Shields and the other fundamentalists who fought against modernism.

And we ask today, where are the contenders against neo-orthodoxy and new evangelicalism? This nation is sadly silent of men and churches and Christians that will stand up and be counted for God and will herald the truth in this nation. That's why we need to pray for Canada. There's no point in us doing a survey of history in this nation and religious issues if we don't get to the real matter of how we, under God, might be a blessing in this nation again.

We have a great work to do. And every Christian ought to be busy for the Lord. Last Wednesday evening, as we went on to learn a little more of the third chapter in Zephaniah, we came to that exhortation.

The Lord is with thee. The King of Israel, even the Lord is in the midst of thee. And then came the call, let not thine hands be slack.

And I think we each one have to look in the mirror and ask the question honestly. Have we been slack? And answer it honestly. And say there have been many times that we have not served the Lord.

Let's face it in Canada. The gospel and a gospel people are dying. What you have in the mega churches in Canada today.

And I'll use them as the shining influence of most communities. The mega evangelical church today is a twisted, perverted advertisement for evangelicalism. And here we are, a small little band of people.

Hardly noticed. Who wants to know about us? But praise God, we're not sewing tears. Praise God, our business is to gather the wheat.

And if God in his grace uses us to even gather one sheaf, it'll be worth it all. Be worth it all. I'm glad tonight that in God's goodness, he has brought us out of the camps of compromise.

And whatever God will make with the Free Presbyterian Church in North America, as we move to our new presbytery in May. Whatever God is going to do with this denomination. And we may never live to see a mighty national revival.

I pray we will. But I am so thankful that we're not here to sew tears. We're sewing the wheat.

And by God's grace, may we do so forever. But we need to pray. We need to pray that God will raise up preachers in this nation.

We need to pray that God will take the truth and pour out his spirit to gather in precious souls. One of the laments at our minister's week of prayer last week, the lament of our Canadian churches and our American churches, is the great difficulty in getting unconverted people into our churches. To get those who know nothing of God to come and hear the gospel.

Here in Cloverdale, that's our lament too. But we can begin to pray about it. We can begin to work.

And we can pray that God will change this awful dryness and drought that's in our land. And revive us again. Let us ever be on our knees.

And let us awaken that the tears do not be sewed on our watch. But let us be busy in the harvest field.

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