

GLEANINGS — March 6, A.D. 2016
Institutional Backsliding, Part Five

God's Word is truth. Truth anchors the human soul. Without it, one is adrift in a sea of relativism; in other words a shadowy realm where there is nothing to depend upon. The story of New Testament scholar Eta Linnemann, as disclosed in her book, "Historical Criticism of the Bible", is revealing.

(Historical Criticism is a theologically liberal approach to Bible study which assumes that statements in Scripture regarding place, time, sequences of events and persons are accepted only insofar as they fit in with established assumptions and theories of human origin.)

As a convert **out of** theological liberalism, Linnemann wrote: "...God through His grace and Word has given me insight into the theoretical dimensions of this theology. Instead of being based on God's Word, it has its foundations in philosophies which made bold to define truth so that God's Word was excluded as the source of truth.source"

There is surely a place in Christian practice for a legitimate version of the high ideals which come to mind when we remember our fine old family of English words: liberality, liberate, liberty, and even liberal. In fact, those ideals only can be "fleshed out" well in the context of moral absolutes and bedrock truths. Among believers, there must be loving tolerance, mutual acceptance, and respect when it comes to non-essentials. Some Christians kneel to pray, some do not. In the apostolic church, some ate meat sacrificed to idols, some did not. Some Christians are very animated and sanguine in worship, others are more reserved and quiet.

Whether or not a Christian may be theologically liberal, however, is not a matter among the "non-essentials". All should pray in faith, and worship in spirit and in truth, and all should stand against this form of idolatry...for that is what theological liberalism is! The ancient Israelites forsook God and served man-made idols in the days of the judges. So God's people today do, when they despise His word and remake "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) into "the faith that has the approval of modern man".

How can Christians fight this plague? Let's revisit the book of Judges. Like the intermittently besieged descendants of Jacob, Church is under great oppression in our land in these days. Might this be on account of wholesale backsliding into complacency, compromise, and theological liberalism? Would God afflict us needlessly with a surrounding society that is perhaps worse than Sodom?

"He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men" (Lamentations 3:33). Is He not the sovereign without whose permission not even Satan can lift a finger (cf. Job 1)? "When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 10:1). The American Church's compromising ways have not pleased Him. Perhaps He is allowing our enemies to chastise us.

Today, the battle is spiritual; we wrestle not against flesh and blood Canaanite oppressors. The Ashtoreth of theological liberalism has seduced us, and we have served Baal: theological liberalism dressed up as orthodoxy. Now is the time to cry out to the Lord! Cry out to the Lord of the harvest. Implore him that mighty deliverers be raised up. What is needed in America today is not another program for economic or educational aid by the government, not a clever political solution, but loud, trumpeting blasts of the pure, unadulterated Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!