

The Concern of Being Too “Conservative”
Revelation 2:1-7
5-3-15

Perhaps most Christians are accused at some point of belonging to a church that is too conservative in its view of Christianity. Whether it is by denominations, or by those churches of Christ that practice things that there is no authority for in Scripture, they are told that they are “too focused on doctrine, not enough on Christ” They are asked “Where is the love?” They are accused of being nitpicking and tedious.

First, we need to understand that the expressions “conservative” and “liberal” are not found in Scripture. They are terms that are political in nature, and do a very poor job of describing Christianity. Almost no church of Christ would describe itself as liberal, yet many would be called such by others. Ultimately, they are terms of a divisive nature that fail to give any information necessary for Godly discernment, and ought to be avoided if we are to speak clearly.

Instead, the Bible speaks to the idea of being “sound”. As the Bible uses the word, it refers to overall integrity (indeed, we might call soundness “spiritual integrity applied”). There are 13 admonitions in the New Testament that point us to the pursuit of sound reasoning:

Sound judgment – Romans 12:3, 1 Peter 4:7
Sound mind – 2 Corinthians 5:13
Sound teaching – 1 Timothy 1:10
Sound doctrine – 1 Tim. 4:6, 2 Tim. 4:3, Titus 1:9, 2:1
Sound words – 1 Timothy 6:3, 2 Timothy 1:13
Sound speech – Titus 2:8
Sound in the Faith – Titus 1:13, 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS TO CHURCHES ON SOUNDNESS The church in Jerusalem – Acts 15:5-7 The church in Antioch – Galatians 2:11-13 The church in Rome – Romans 16:17 The church in Corinth – 2 Corinthians 11:2 The churches of in Galatia – Galatians 1:6 The church in Ephesus – Ephesians 4:11-16 The church in Philippi – Philippians 2:2 The church in Colosse – Colossians 1:28-29 The church in Thessalonica – I Thessalonians 3:8 The church in Pergamum – Revelation 2:14 The church in Smyrna – Revelation 2:10 The church in Thyatira – Revelation 2:20 The church in Sardis – Revelation 3:3 The church in Philadelphia – Revelation 3:8

We should conclude that the most important work of the church: Spiritual Integrity. We say this is the most important work because when we search the Bible, we find that EVERY CHURCH in the New Testament is in some fashion instructed or demonstrates the action of soundness.

What we must also consider is the nature of apostasy (falling away), the most often referenced prophecy after Christ’s final coming of the New Testament. The truth is churches fall constantly, leading to members losing their salvation. However, churches NEVER fall with a “big slip”. Churches ALWAYS fall in little steps. Little things creep into the church (such as programs, extra offices, extra works) that may not feel or seem contrary to Scripture at first. Over time they are expanded and enhanced until they have dominated the church, and subverted its purpose. Much like the idea of boiling frogs, change is brought about in little steps until the whole idea has taken over.

Let us consider the admonition to the Ephesians in Revelation 2:1-7 to answer the question “can a church be too conservative”? In the Ephesian admonition we are told that they were RIGHT to scrutinize and be “nit-picky” in matters of doctrine. Their focus on soundness was absolute. However, they were WRONG to lose sight of love (abstract enough of an idea that we can insert any basic principle in the passage). It ultimately is an admonition about balance in the church.

In conclusion, a church can never be “too sound”, but it can lose balance.