

Stay Sharp

Article 8: Christian Living

Allegheny District

Waterdam Church

February 12-13, 2015

Greg Strand



I. Introduction

Statement of Faith

Article 8: Christian Living

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

God's gospel compels us to Christ-like living and witness to the world.

Rationale

1. This kind of refreshing reminds us that the Bible alone is unchangeable, not a Statement of Faith or Creed, and is thus our ultimate authority. Every doctrinal statement is a human product and should never be accorded the status of authority and permanence that is held by the Bible alone.
2. Every doctrinal statement is written at a specific time in a particular historical context.
3. Our key EFCA principle to preserve evangelical unity in the gospel is at the heart of our identity, and, more importantly, our theology.



Themes of the Proposed Revision

1. Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology – note the headings, the order of the articles and the actual articles themselves.
2. God's Glory – the SOF begins (“for His own glory”) and ends (“to the praise of His glorious grace”) with an emphasis on God and His glory.
3. Theology and doxology – all theology is doxological, i.e. it is the context of worship. This is how the SOF ends: “to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.”

4. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy – doctrinal statements are made along with the practical implications of those truths in our lives as the people of God. In any given day in the life of the church, certain truths are necessary to emphasize to ensure that the faith once for all entrusted to the saints is being upheld.

- Article 2: The Bible: “Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.”
- Article 7: The Church: “The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper”
- Article 8: Christian Living: “We believe that God’s justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God’s Word, the Spirit’s power, and fervent prayer in Christ’s name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ’s commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.”
- Article 9: Christ’s Return: “The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.”
- Article 10: Response and Eternal Destiny: "We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.”

5. Logical and Theological Statement (coherent whole) – each phrase will make sense in the context of the article, in the context of the whole SOF.

6. Builds to Response – the only appropriate response to this great God and what He has done is to believe the gospel: “We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Logical and Theological Flow

- A. This follows the biblical narrative, the unfolding plan of God's redemption.
- B. It follows theologically and logically in that the work of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit creates a new community that is marked by a new way of believing and living.
- C. This emphasizes that the gospel has power to change lives, and we believed that something of the nature of that transformed life should be included in our Statement of Faith.
- D. Though there is no exact parallel, this article does expand what is stated at the conclusion of article 4 in our present Statement of Faith: "... and empower the believer for godly living and service."

E. This is an important correction to much of evangelicalism, including the Free Church. With our right and important emphasis on justification by faith, which is a biblical truth, we have neglected this doctrine of sanctification and the responsibility to the church and the world it demands, which is also a biblical truth.

F. This emphasis is actually part of our history/heritage as evidenced in the 1912 Norwegian-Danish Association Statement of Faith. Here is the concluding article: XII. We believe that the sole duty of the Christian Church is to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world, and to assist charitable institutions, to work for righteousness and temperance, for unity and cooperation with all believers, and for peace among all people and nations on the whole earth.”

God: 1. . . God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible: 2. . . Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition: 3. . . In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Jesus Christ: 4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. . . He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ: 5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit: 6. . . He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church: 7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers.

Christ's Return: 9. . . The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny: 10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

Union with Christ

- Regeneration
- Adoption
- Justification
- Sanctification
- Resurrection
- Glorification

Importance of Reaffirming the Biblical/Doctrinal Truths of Christian Living Today (which also carries with it denials)

- Justification and sanctification are components of salvation, and they cannot be separated, which is happening in many evangelical circles, pitting one against another
- Life together is emphasized such that the Christian life is to be lived in community, over against many in the broader evangelical community that attempt to be lone ranger Christians
- We are to care for others, remember the one another commands of Scripture, beginning with one's own life and family, but not ending there. There is a larger family, this new community to whom we are accountable and responsible, and then the broader world
- True faith has implications – it is mental, but it has other entailments

“The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness.” Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

We believe God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose (Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33, 35; Heb. 11:6; Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17, 23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 5:23; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 5:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Tit. 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 6:11, 14; 1 Pet. 1:15; Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 12:1, 14; Rom. 6; 2 Tim. 1:9; Jms. 2:17; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).



Grace and Godliness: Justification and Sanctification

We believe God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose (Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33, 35; Heb. 11:6; Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17, 23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 5:23; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 5:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Tit. 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 6:11, 14; 1 Pet. 1:15; Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 12:1, 14; Rom. 6; 2 Tim. 1:9; Js. 2:17; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).

Justification and sanctification must never be confused, but neither can they be separated. Both are aspects of God's gracious work in our lives, and both are consequences of our union with Christ by the Spirit. We are first declared righteous as, in union with Christ, we are clothed with righteousness. Then we progressively become righteous in ourselves as we live out our new life in Christ by God's power. God's grace in the gospel compels us to seek godliness.

Grudem

Justification

- Legal standing
- Once for all time
- Entirely God's work (monergistic)
- Perfect in this life
- The same in all Christians

Sanctification

- Internal condition
- Continuous throughout life
- We cooperate (synergistic)
- Not perfect in this life
- Greater in some than in others

Introduction

- Life and Doctrine
- Early Church and the Contemporary Church – Intolerant and Hateful
- Crusades – what of the culture are we baptizing for spiritual effect
- Gospel – lips and life

History

- Legalism and License
- Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy
- Paul (Rom. 3) and James (2)
- Novationism and Donatism
- Roman Catholic Church
- Lutheran and Reformed: three uses of the law
- Indicative and Imperative
- Free grace and Lordship salvation
- New Perspective on Paul
- Hole or Holy
- Radical and crazy vs. boring and ordinary

Holiness (J. C. Ryle)

“Sanctification is that inward spiritual work which the Lord Jesus Christ works in a man by the Holy Ghost, when He calls him to be a true believer. He not only washes him from his sins in His own blood, but He also *separates* him from his natural love of sin and the world, puts a new principle in his heart, and makes him practically godly in life.”

The True Nature of Sanctification:

1. Sanctification, then, is the invariable result of that vital union with Christ which true faith gives to a Christian.
2. Sanctification, again, is the outcome and inseparable consequence of regeneration.
3. Sanctification, again, is the only certain evidence of that indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is essential to salvation.
4. Sanctification, again, is the only sure mark of God's election.
5. Sanctification, again, is a thing that will always be seen. (p. 23)
6. Sanctification, again, is a thing for which every believer is responsible.
7. Sanctification, again, is a thing which admits of growth and degrees.
8. Sanctification, again, is a thing which depends greatly on a diligent use of scriptural means.
9. Sanctification, again, is a thing which does not prevent a man having a great deal of inward spiritual conflict.
10. Sanctification, again, is a thing which cannot justify a man, and yet it pleases God.
11. Sanctification, again, is a thing which will be found absolutely necessary as a witness to our character in the great day of judgment.
12. Sanctification, in the last place, is absolutely necessary, in order to train and prepare us for heaven.

The Visible Evidence of Sanctification:

1. True sanctification then does not consist in talk about religion.
2. True sanctification does not consist in temporary religious feelings.
3. True sanctification does not consist in outward formalism and external devoutness.
4. Sanctification does not consist in retirement from our place in life, and the renunciation of our social duties.
5. Sanctification does not consist in the occasional performance of right actions. (p. 32)
6. Genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual respect to God's law, and habitual effort to live in obedience to it as the rule of life.
7. Genuine sanctification will show itself in an habitual endeavor to do Christ's will, and to live by His practical precepts.
8. Genuine sanctification will show itself in an habitual desire to live up to the standard which St. Paul sets before the churches in his writings.
9. Genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual attention to the active graces which our Lord so beautifully exemplified, and especially to the grace of charity.
10. Genuine sanctification, in the last place, will show itself in habitual attention to the passive graces of Christianity.

Distinction Between Justification and Sanctification: Alike

1. Both proceed originally from the free grace of God. It is of His gift alone that believers are justified or sanctified at all.
2. Both are part of that great work of salvation which Christ, in the eternal covenant, has undertaken on behalf of His people. Christ is the fountain of life from which pardon and holiness both flow. The root of each is Christ.
3. Both are to be found in the same persons. Those who are justified are always sanctified, and those who are sanctified are always justified. God has joined them together, and they cannot be put asunder.
4. Both begin at the same time. The moment a person begins to be a justified person, he also begins to be a sanctified person. He may not feel it, but it is a fact.
5. Both are alike necessary to salvation. No one ever reached heaven without a renewed heart as well as forgiveness, without the Spirit's grace as well as the blood of Christ, without a meetness for eternal glory as well as a title. The one is just as necessary as the other.

Distinction Between Justification and Sanctification: Differ

1. Justification is the *reckoning* and counting a man to be righteous for the sake of another, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Sanctification is the actual *making* a man inwardly righteous, though it may be in a very feeble degree.
2. The righteousness we have by our justification is *not our own*, but the everlasting perfect righteousness of our great Mediator Christ, imputed to us, and made our own by faith. The righteousness we have by sanctification is *our own* righteousness, imparted, inherent, and wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, but mingles with much infirmity and imperfection.
3. In justification our own works have no place at all, and simple faith in Christ is the one thing needful. In sanctification our own works are of vast importance, and God bids us fight, and watch, and pray, and strive, and take pains, and labor.
4. Justification is a finished and complete work, and a man is perfectly justified the moment he believes. Sanctification is an imperfect work, comparatively, and will never be perfected until we reach heaven.
5. Justification admits of no growth or increase: a man is as much justified the hour he first comes to Christ by faith as he will be to all eternity. Sanctification is eminently a progressive work, and admits of continual growth and enlargement so long as a man lives.
6. Justification has special reference to our *persons*, our standing in God's sight, and our deliverance from guilt. Sanctification has special reference to our *natures*, and the moral renewal of our hearts.
7. Justification gives us our title to heaven, and boldness to enter in. Sanctification give us our meetness for heaven, and prepares us to enjoy it when we dwell there.
8. Justification is the act of God *about* us, and is not easily discerned by others. Sanctification is the work of God *within* us, and cannot be hid in its outward manifestation from the eyes of men.

Sanctification: Practical [Pastoral] Reflections

1. For one thing, let us awake to a sense of the perilous state of many professing Christians.
2. For another thing, let us make sure work of our own condition, and never rest till we feel and know that we are “sanctified” ourselves.
3. For another thing, if we would be sanctified, our course is clear and plain—we must begin with Christ.
4. For another thing, if we would grow in holiness and become more sanctified, we must continually go on as we began, and be ever making fresh applications to Christ.
5. For another thing, let us not expect too much from our own hearts here below.
6. Finally, let us never be ashamed of making much of sanctification, and contending for a high standard of holiness.

Kevin DeYoung, What we all agree on, and what we (probably) don't, in this sanctification debate

Sanctification: What We All Agree On (I Think)

1. We cannot justify ourselves by anything we do or try to accomplish.
2. Growth in godliness is impossible apart from the inner working of the Holy Spirit.
3. The law of God is meant to convict sinners, including Christian sinners, of disobedience
4. On this side of heaven we will always be *simul iustus et peccator*.
5. The Bible is concerned about our obedience to the moral law of God.

Sanctification: What We (Probably) Don't Agree On

1. Can we exhort one another to work hard at growing in godliness?
2. Is there more than one motivation for holiness?
3. Is it right that we try to please God as Christians?
4. Is God displeased with Christians when they sin?
5. Does God love all justified believers identically?
6. Is sanctification by faith alone?
7. Can we be obedient to God in this life?
8. Are good works necessary for salvation?
9. Is growth in godliness a legitimate ground for being assured of our right standing before God?
10. Is it moralistic to seek to improve in holiness of conduct and character?
11. What is the relationship between law and gospel?
12. Does gospel preaching include exhortations and warnings as well as promises and assurances?
13. Is the good work in sanctification produced in us by God also done *by us* in the execution of our willing and acting?
14. What is the place of union with Christ in the order of salvation?
15. Can we preach the law pointedly, not only for conviction of sin, but so that we might keep striving for greater obedience to God's revealed will?

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

We believe God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially and we believe that, in loving God supremely and others sacrificially, we are to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed (Dt. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37-39; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 10:27; Rom. 12:10; 14:13; 15:7, 14; Gal. 5:26; Eph. 4:32; 1 Thess. 3:12; 5:11, 15; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 4:9; Dt. 15:11; Psa. 82:3,4; Psa. 140:12; Prov. 14:21,31; 19:17; 22:9,16,22,23; 28:8; 29:7; 31:8,9; Jer. 22:16; Gal. 2:10; Js. 1:27; Ex. 23:6; Lev. 19:15; Psa. 82:3,4; 140:12; Prov. 29:7; 31:9; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 9:24; Mic. 6:8; Zech. 7:9,10; Matt. 23:23; Luke 4:18).

Doctrinal Survey

Why are we doing this?

- Mandated by EFCA BOD
(annual update; doctrinal survey every five years [2013]; SOF review, with possible revision, every 15-20 years [2023-2028])
- The importance of the Bible, theology and doctrine in the EFCA.

How was it structured?

- Assumed respondents affirm the SOF
- Questions and structure of the survey based on our Statement of Faith
 - Major doctrinal issues
 - “significance of silence” matters
 - Contemporary challenges
- Anonymous
- Comments

What do we desire to learn?

- Informational purposes, a doctrinal “pulse”
 - What are there areas of disagreement among Evangelicals broadly which could become areas of controversy and conflict among us?
 - What issues need to be addressed?
 - Where is instruction needed?
 - How can we help our pastors work through these issues?
 - What are the theological trajectories – where are we headed?

Who received the survey?

- All senior pastors of EFC churches and everyone credentialed by the EFCA (not all in EFCA ministries)
- Survey taken from November 7, 2013 to December 7, 2013

What were some of the statistics?

- 1,928 emails sent; 1,074 responded: 55.7%! To a 46 question survey that took about 20-25 minutes!
- 74% of respondents were credentialed in the EFCA
- 38% credentialed over 20 years in the EFCA; 29% 11-20 years.
- 3,670 comments!
- **DOCTRINE MATTERS!**

Remember: Surveys have both strengths and weaknesses.

- Survey questions
- Respondents
- Definitions
- Misunderstanding/confusion
- “Pulse” at a point in time
- Over interpret or under interpret

General Assessments

- Strong agreement on essential doctrinal truths
- Breadth represented in the areas of “silence”
- Need for instruction, education, information in some areas
- Some appear to be outside of parameters
- Addressed many of these issues over the years at the Theology Conference and in *Evangelical Convictions*



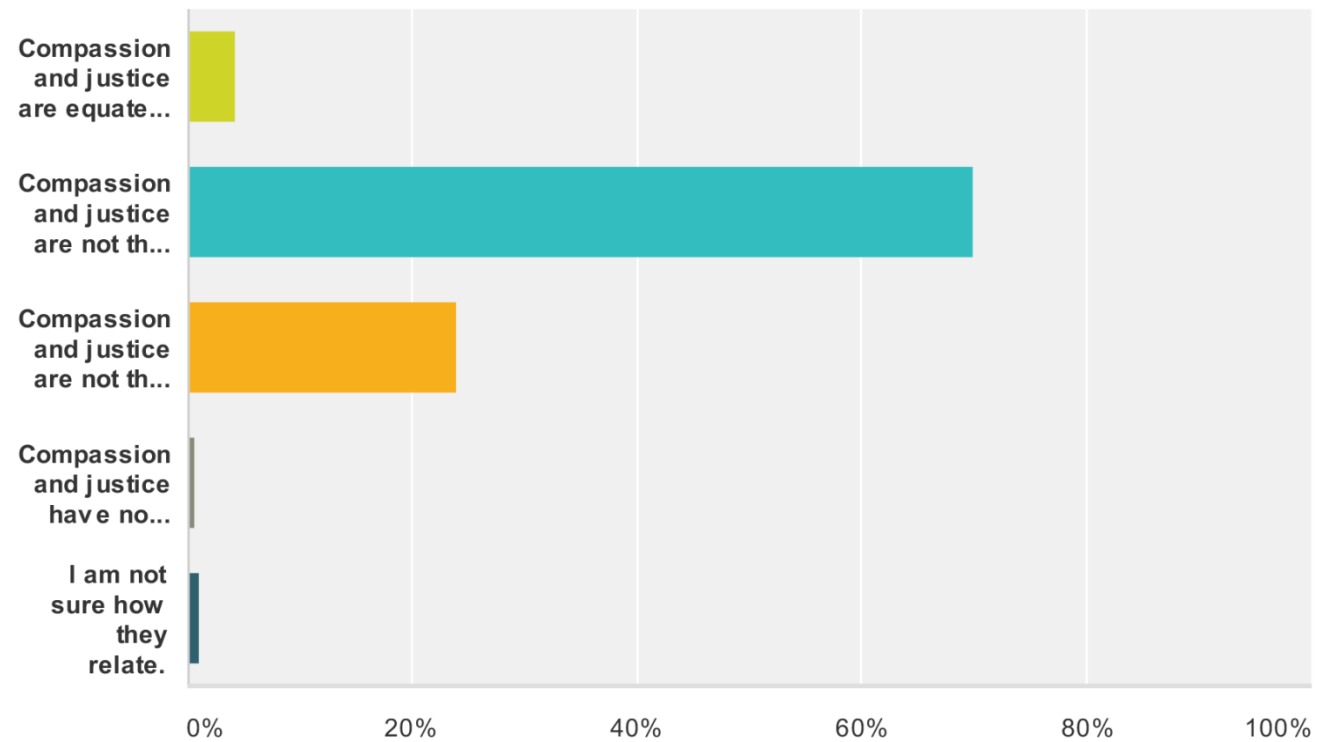
Article 8

Christian Living

2013 EFCA Doctrinal Survey

Q30 Which statement best explains your understanding of how compassion, justice and deeds of mercy relate to the gospel?

Answered: 891 Skipped: 183

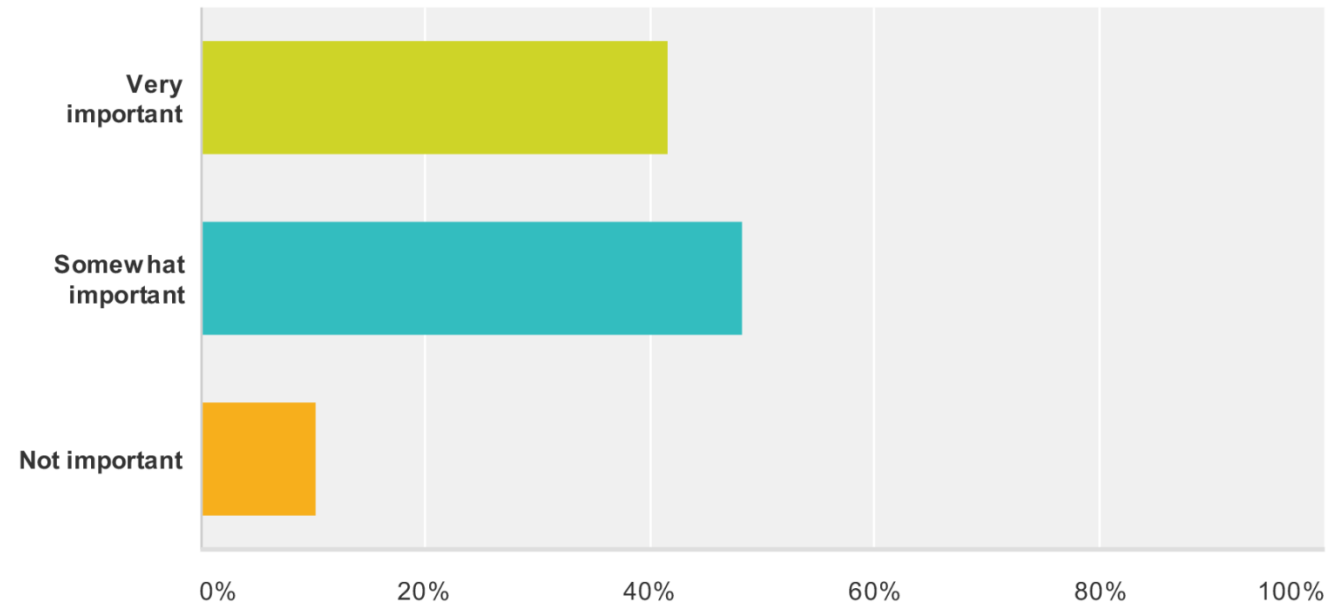


- Compassion and justice are equated with the gospel. 4.26%
- Compassion and justice are not the gospel but are a necessary outworking of the gospel. 69.92%
- Compassion and justice are not the gospel but biblical commands. 24.02%
- Compassion and justice have no relation to the gospel at all. 0.67%
- I am not sure how they relate. 1.12%

2013 EFCA Doctrinal Survey

Q31 How important is racial/ethnic diversity in the local church to the visible manifestation of the gospel?

Answered: 889 Skipped: 185

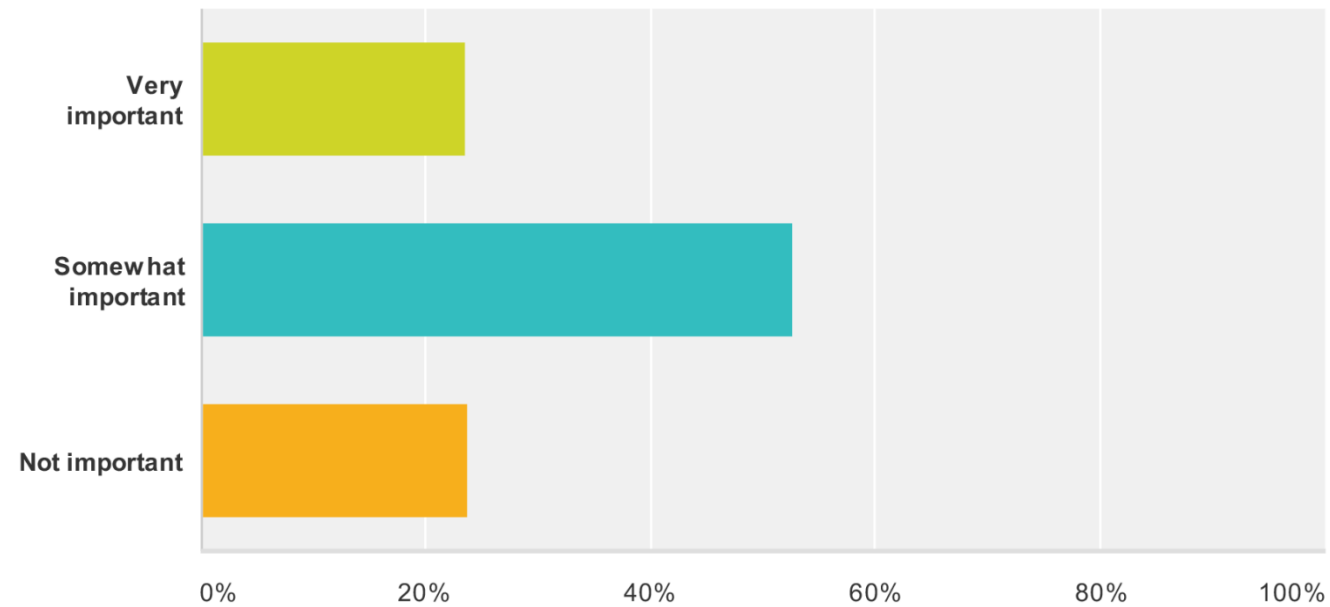


- Very important: 41.51%
- Somewhat important: 48.14%
- Not important: 10.35%

2013 EFCA Doctrinal Survey

Q32 How important to your congregation is racial/ethnic diversity?

Answered: 881 Skipped: 193

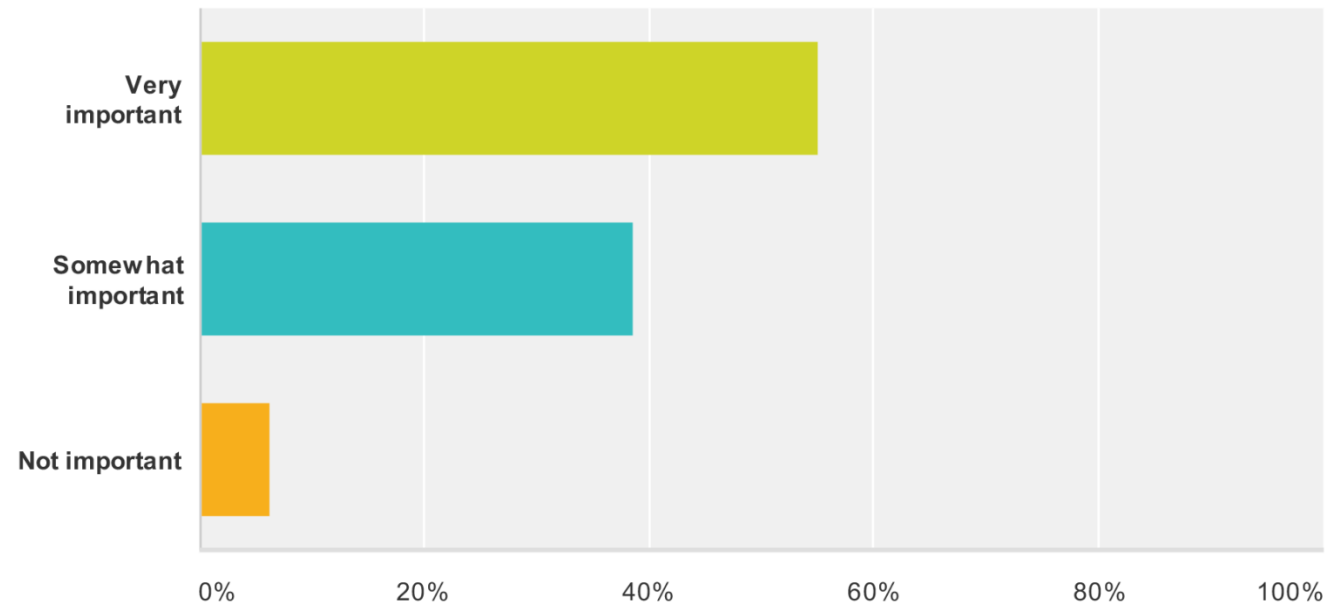


- Very important: 23.50%
- Somewhat important: 52.67%
- Not important: 23.84%

2013 EFCA Doctrinal Survey

Q33 How important is generational diversity in the local church to the visible manifestation of the gospel?

Answered: 895 Skipped: 179

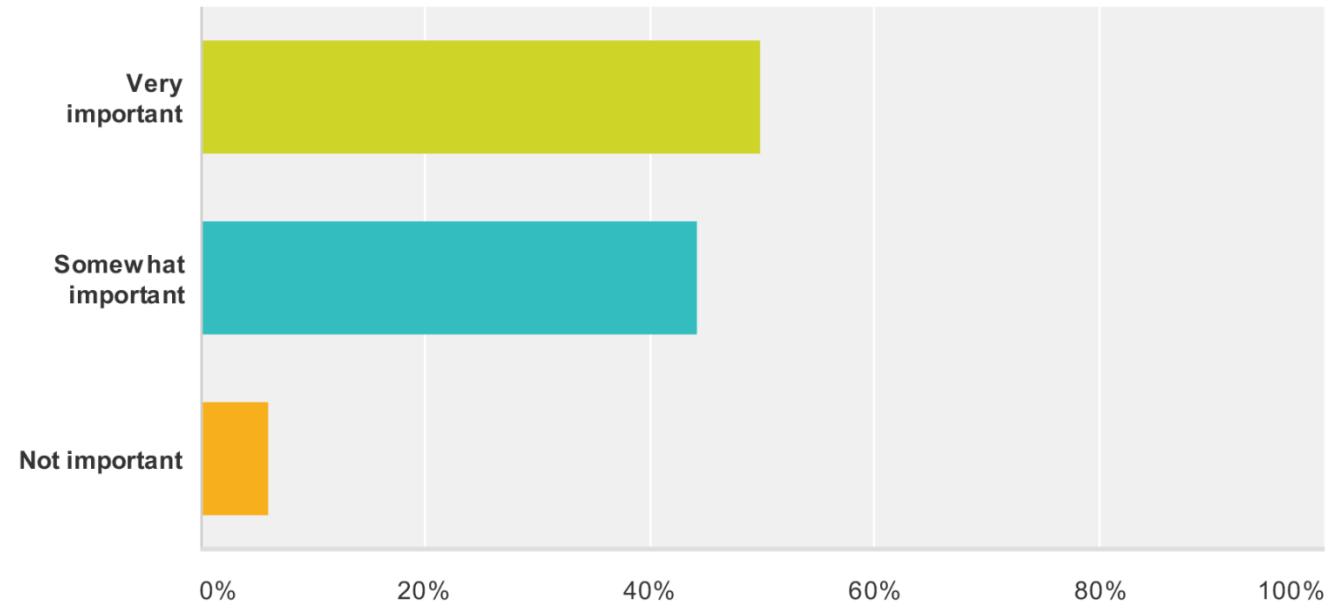


- Very important: 54.97%
- Somewhat important: 38.66%
- Not important: 6.37%

2013 EFCA Doctrinal Survey

Q34 How important to your congregation is generational diversity?

Answered: 882 Skipped: 192




- Very important: 49.89%
- Somewhat important: 44.10%
- Not important: 6.01%

- Strong affirmation (very and somewhat important) that the gospel has entailments to compassion and justice (94%) and generational diversity (94%)
- Strong affirmation (very and somewhat important) that compassion and justice (90%; 10% not important; 198 comments) and generational diversity (94%; 6% not important) manifest the gospel.
- Individuals taking the survey were more committed to these issues than were the local churches.
- Local context was important in responding to these questions.

Framing Thoughts on Christians and Culture

- In but not of: Jn. 17
- Peter's progressive transformation: Acts 2, 10, Gal. 2; Zacchaeus Lk. 19:1-10
- Colony or outpost of heaven: Heb. 12:18-24
- Indigenized and Pilgrim
- Multi-generational, Multi-ethnic, Multi-cultural



Supreme Love, Joyful Sacrifice, Living Faith: The Great Commandment

Loving God Supremely

- God is the supreme object of our worship.
- We love God when we express to him our thanksgiving and praise.
- We love him when we long to hear his voice through the reading and exposition of his Word.
- We love him when we acknowledge our dependence on him as we come to him in prayer.
- We love him when we guard our affections, lest we be drawn away after other objects of our devotion, for anything that usurps God's place in our hearts becomes an idol.
- We love God when we humbly submit our wills in obedience to him.

Scripture speaks about the love of God in five distinguishable ways (cf. D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, [Wheaton: Crossway, 1999], 16-24):

1. Unique love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father (Jn 3:35 5:20; 14:31, etc.).
2. God's providential love over all he has made (cf. 'common grace') – Gen 1 – it is 'good'; Mt 10:29.
3. God's salvific stance toward a fallen world (Jn 3:16, here refers to the moral order in willful/culpable rebellion against God; cf. Ezk 33:11).
4. God's particular, effective, selecting love toward his elect (e.g. Israel, church, individuals – Dt 7:7-8; 10:14-15; Mal 1:2-3; Eph 1:4ff; 5:25; 1 Jn 4:8-10).
5. God's love toward his own people in a provisional or conditional way – conditional, that is, on obedience. This does not have to do with how we become Christians, but with our relationship with the Lord once we know him (cf. Ex 20:6; Ps 103:9-11, 13, 17-18; Jude 21; Jn 15:9-10).

We must not absolutize any one of these, but rather understand them as complementary.

1. If we absolutize the intra-Trinitarian love of God as the model of God's loving relationships we must remember that that relationship is one of perfection, untarnished by sin. But it takes too little account of how God manifests himself towards us – his rebellious image-bearers in love *and* wrath.
2. If God's love is nothing more than his providential ordering of everything this is not far from a beneficent "force." It says little about the story of Scripture – cross, resurrection, new creation.
3. If God's love is exclusively portrayed as an inviting, yearning, sinner-seeking passion, then this, too, takes little account of God's justice, sovereignty, holiness, and glory.
4. If God's love exclusively refers to his love for the elect, it is too easy to drift toward a simple and absolute bifurcation: God loves the elect and hates the reprobate. But this, too, is one-sided.
5. If God's love is exclusively tied to human obedience, then it might lead to a merit theology, endless fretting about whether we have been good enough today to enjoy the love of God, etc.

Loving Others Sacrificially

Caring for One Another

The New Testament is laced with calls to this kind of love, with a myriad of “one another” passages. We are to—

- “be devoted to one another” (Rom. 12:10)
- “honor one another above ourselves” (Rom. 12:10)
- “live in harmony with one another” (Rom. 12:16; 1 Pet. 3:8)
- “stop passing judgment on one another” (Rom. 14:13)
- “accept one another, just as Christ accepted you” (Rom. 15:7)
- “instruct one another” (Rom. 15:14)
- “greet one another with a holy kiss” (2 Cor. 13:12)
- “serve one another in love” (Gal. 5:13)
- “be kind and compassionate to one another” (Eph. 4:32)

- “speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19)
- “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21)
- “bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another” (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:2)
- “teach and admonish one another with all wisdom” (Col. 3:16)
- “encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thess. 5:11)
- “spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24)
- “love one another deeply, from the heart” (1 Pet. 1:22)
- “offer hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Pet. 4:9)
- “clothe ourselves with humility toward one another” (1 Pet. 5:5)

Compassion Toward the Poor

The Bible is quite explicit and realistic about this responsibility: “There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land” (Deut. 15:11).

- Prov. 14:21— “He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.”
- Prov. 22:9— “A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.”
- Prov. 28:27— “He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.”

We are called to have compassion for the poor because this reflects God's concern. God identifies himself with those who have no value in the eyes of the world:

- Prov. 14:31— “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”
- Prov. 19:17— “He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.”

Showing kindness to the poor and giving with compassion to meet their needs is an act of love toward God. It demonstrates a sincere and selfless love, since it promises no return in this world. Jesus commended this kind of love when he said: “When you give a . . . dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. (Luke 14:12-14)

Gerhard Uhlhorn, a German Lutheran theologian and historian, referring to the early church's ministry of compassion, writes, "The rich gave what he gave to God, and the poor received what he received from God. Thus the temptation of the rich to exalt themselves above the poor, and the humiliation of the poor at being obliged to receive assistance from others, were removed, while at the same time discontent and murmuring, as well as insolent demands and presumptuous requests, were done away with" (*Christian Charity in the Ancient Church* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883], 146).

Justice for the Oppressed

The Bible speaks of various ways that people find themselves in poverty and need.

- Sometimes such a state is the result of circumstances beyond their control—disaster, famine, illness, injury, or the death of a provider, like a husband or a father.
- Sometimes people are poor because of their own deficiencies—they lack self-discipline or enduring effort: “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty” (Prov. 14:23; also 6:9-11; 24:30-34).
- But another cause of poverty mentioned often in the Bible is injustice and oppression: “A poor man’s field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away” (Prov. 13:23).

We must take to heart the biblical teaching on this important theme. The commands of Scripture are explicit and unambiguous:

- “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked” (Ps. 82:3-4).
- “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern” (Prov. 29:7).
- “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Prov. 31:8-9).
- ““He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?’ declares the LORD” (Jer. 22:16).
- “Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (Isa. 1:16-17).

In the Bible the Lord is on the side of the poor because no one else is. And he is on the side of the poor because he is on the side of justice:

- "Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, for the LORD will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them" (Prov. 22:22-23; 23:10-11).
- "I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy" (Ps. 140:12).
- "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling" (Ps. 68:5).
- "Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin" (Deut. 24:14-15).

Regarding ministries of compassion and justice, the church has often vacillated between two extremes, either focusing on the physical needs of people while assuming or neglecting the spiritual or seeing people only as “souls to be saved” and disregarding their tangible suffering in this world.

In response to the inequitable distribution of food among widows, the apostles saw to it that some were assigned to address that situation. But they did so while maintaining the priority of their ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:2-4). The church today must do the same. Ministries of compassion have been a strong part of our Free Church history, both in America and around the world, through the establishment of orphanages, homes for the elderly and hospitals. Certainly, our highest priority must be the proclamation of the gospel, for the gospel alone can address our deepest need, and the church alone can bring this gospel to the world. But while maintaining this priority, we ought not to neglect the very pressing material needs of those around us. Love requires no less.

Article 10 is the ballast to this ministry which affirms the eternal consequence of dying apart from Christ. We believe we ought to seek to alleviate all human suffering, but especially that which is eternal.

“My purpose is simple: to set forth nothing more or less than *the classic Christian teaching of good works* grounded in salvation by grace through faith. I will focus on those texts on which there is substantial agreement between traditions of east and west – Catholic Protestant, and Orthodox – with regard to both their importance and ecumenical authority.”
(Thomas C. Oden, *The Good Works Reader*, 2)

“*The Justification Reader* dealt with the error of desperately seeking righteousness *through* our own works. *The Good Works Reader* deals with the opposite error: desperately pretending righteousness *without* good works. Together they two fit hand in glove to resist the opposite temptations: faith without works of love, and works of love without faith.”
(Oden, 7)

Compassion and Justice

Introduction

1. Early church, cf. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1997).
2. Social gospel of the liberal church.
3. Gospel affecting the 'soul' with no concern for the body, cf. Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947, 2003).
4. Renewed interest in "compassion and justice."
5. It is important we address this issue, and it is imperative we get this right and its relation to the gospel.

This emphasis/focus is not new to the EFCA. The Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association Statement of Faith of 1912 referred to this in the final article: **“12. We believe that the sole duty of the Christian Church is to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world, and to assist charitable institutions, to work for righteousness and temperance, for unity and cooperation with all believers, and for peace among all people and nations of the whole earth.”**

This is not the way we would state this today, but they were committed to the gospel and its entailments, namely, **“the sole duty of the Christian Church is to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world”** and **“to assist charitable institutions,”** i.e. compassion, and **“to work for righteousness and temperance,”** i.e. rightness or biblical justice. (The focus on temperance reminds us that SOFs are written in a historical context, which means they need to be revised, because that is not something we will say is an essential today, or any day!) So our statement in article 8 is not new for the Free Church. But in the 1950 SOF, and much of evangelicalism during these days, it did get lost in the midst of the evangelical response to modernism, liberalism and the social gospel (cf. Henry).

How shall we speak about this?

1. Compassion and justice ministries are part and parcel of the gospel.
2. Compassion and justice ministries are part and parcel of biblical mandates.
3. Compassion and justice ministries are intimately connected to the gospel and are an outworking of the gospel.

“Many thoughtful theologians have rightly distinguished between the gospel and the effects of the gospel. Is transforming local public schools ‘gospel-ministry’? Not if you’re going to use ‘gospel’ in the sense in which the NT does. But that’s different from distinguishing it as part of the effects of the gospel: we do good because we have been transformed and care for other people who are made in the image of God. But if you call this ‘gospel-ministry,’ the long-term effect tends to be that we lose what the NT says is the gospel. The gospel becomes so diluted that it becomes a Christianized moralism and nothing more.”

“Carson on the Gospel and Social Action”

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2009/08/06/carson-on-gospel-and-social-action/>

Don Carson, *Themelios* 33/2 (September 2008), addresses with pastors “the debate between those Christians who say that we should primarily be about the business of heralding the gospel and planting churches, and those who say that our responsibility as Christians extends to the relief of oppression, suffering, and poverty in all their forms.”

“These pastors approached the subject out of the conviction that gospel proclamation must occupy pride of place in our priorities, but they represented quite different position on what follows from this, some of them hoping for a new Evangelical Awakening and others fearful of a new round of gospel-destroying liberalism.”

After much discussion, Carson writes that there was “a broad consensus that Christians who understand the priority of preparing people for eternity must also help people here and now, and that gospel proclamation must not be set antithetically against deeds of mercy.”

Despite this agreement, the gathered pastors returned to this pointed question: “Granted that we ought to be engaged in acts of mercy, what safeguards can be set in place so as to minimize the risk that the deeds of mercy will finally swamp the proclamation of the gospel and the passionate desire to see men and women reconciled to God by faith in Christ Jesus and his atoning death and resurrection?”

Carson gave two answers. “First, it is helpful to distinguish between the responsibilities of the church qua church and the responsibilities of Christians.” And second, “Preach hell.”

<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/33-2/editorial>

Tim Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” *Themelios* 33.3 (2008), 8-22.

<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/publications/33-3/the-gospel-and-the-poor>

(cf. also *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* [Dutton, 2010])

Jonathan Edwards, “Christian Charity: or, The Duty of Charity to the Poor, Explained and Enforced.”

1. Believing the gospel will move us to give to the poor.
2. Ministry to the poor is a crucial sign that we believe the gospel.

Keller asks, What about the ministry to the poor and the ministry of evangelism? He states the following:

1. Evangelism is distinct.
2. Evangelism is more basic than ministry to the poor.
3. But ministry to the poor is inseparably connected to evangelism.
4. Inseparable does not mean a rigid, temporal, order.

Keller concludes that they go together theologically and practically.

They go together theologically. The resurrection shows us that God not only *created both* body and spirit but will also *redeem* both body and spirit. The salvation Jesus will eventually bring in its fullness will include liberation from *all* the effects of sin – not only spiritual but physical and material as well. Jesus came both preaching the Word and healing and feeding.

They go together practically. We must be ever wary of collapsing evangelism into deed ministry as the social gospel did, but loving deeds are an irreplaceable witness to the power and nature of God's grace, an irreplaceable testimony to the truth of the gospel.

Doug Birdsall, Lausanne III Executive Chair, an Asian Access missionary based at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, was interviewed by *CT* and has a similar emphasis. Quoting from the article:

“Birdsall says evangelism and social justice must go hand in hand. In light of pluralistic societies and the New Atheism, he says, Christians are more likely to embrace justice and mercy matters at the expense of the foundational truths that Jesus is the only way to God and that Scripture is the ultimate authority. It's never hard to find enough American churchgoers to build a house, but drawing interest in a Bible study is another matter, says Birdsall.”

“There is a concern that our message is offensive, so there is a tendency to downplay it because respectability and likeability are important to us,’ Birdsall says. ‘If we do everything but proclaim the message, that's just a partial gospel.’”

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/september/34.66.html>

Some Reminders for us in the EFCA –

1. This statement occurs in the larger SOF, which consists of other important truths.
2. We must distinguish between the gospel and the entailments or effects of the gospel.
3. The connection must be made so this ministry is not merely trendy. It is biblical.
4. We are concerned to save people for time and eternity and to reduce suffering in this world and the next.
5. The ballast - the doctrine of hell.


Mark Dever, “How to Survive a Cultural Crisis”

1. Remember that churches exist to work for supernatural change.
2. Understand that persecution is normal.
3. Eschew utopianism.
4. Make use of our democratic stewardship.
5. Trust the Lord, not human circumstances.
6. Remember that everything we have is God's grace.
7. Rest in the certainty of Christ's victory.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. **With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil.** In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

We believe that with God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name (Eph. 6:10-18), we (Heb. 3:13; 10:25), are to combat the spiritual forces of evil (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:11, 12; 2 Tim. 4:7; 1 Jn. 5:3-4).



Spiritual Life in the Now and Not Yet

“For our struggle,” Paul writes, “is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). God’s kingdom advances not through force of arms, but through the spread of the gospel. God’s rule is manifest where spiritual rebels turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, and God’s glory is exhibited as the gospel flows out in acts of love.

Combat the Spiritual Forces of Evil

"There are two and equal opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight." (C. S. Lewis *The Screwtape Letters*, preface)



Satan: Scripture

Genesis 3:1: Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

1 Chronicles 21:1–30: Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.

Job 1:6–12: Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

Zechariah 3:1–2: Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?”

Matthew 4:1–11: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 6:5–15: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 12:22–30: Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. . . . “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? . . . But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 13:1–23: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

Mark 1:12–13: The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

Luke 4:1–13: And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. . . . “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Luke 22:31–34: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

John 17:6–19: I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

Acts 5:1–11: But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

Romans 16:17–20: I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1 Corinthians 5:1-8: you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:1-9: Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

2 Corinthians 2:3–11: Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

2 Corinthians 4:1–6: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 11:1–4: But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:5–15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 12:7–10: So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

Ephesians 2:1–10: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

Ephesians 4:25–32: Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

Ephesians 6:10–20: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Colossians 2:11–15: He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Hebrews 2:10–18: Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

1 Peter 5:8: Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1 John 3:4–9: Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

1 John 5:18–21: We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Revelation 12:9–10: And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Theology

- Creation
- Biblical Worldview
- Reality of Angelic Beings: Reality of Satan and Demons
- Reality of War
- *Christus Victor* (through *Christus Vicarious*) (1 Jn. 3:8; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:15 Christus Victor Rev. 12:10 contrasting Heb. 7:25)
- Demons: Demonization and Demon-Possession

Angels

We may define angels as follows: Angels are created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies. (Grudem, 397)

Satan and Demons

Like angels, they are also created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence but without physical bodies. We may define demons as follows: Demons are evil angels who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world. (Grudem, 412)

Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, proposes that one of the “primary elements of continuous renewal” in a church is “authority in spiritual conflict,” 133-144. We are not on the defensive. We have authority from Christ himself. The blows we do receive from Satan “come from a retreating enemy,” as Lovelace says, because of the decisive victory of Jesus on our behalf.

Lovelace draws from Scripture five fall-back strategies of Satan:

1. Temptation

“The enemy strategy here is either to disfigure a Christian’s witness through public scandal, to gain some evidence through which his or her conscience can be accused and discouraged, or to weaken faith in the possibility of sanctification in some contested area.”

2. Deception

“Negatively, demonic agents induce a strong conscious aversion to biblical truth, an inability to comprehend it and a distaste for what little can be understood. . . . Positively, the forces of darkness inspire and empower antichristian religious counterfeits The deceiving work of Satan can even be done in and through Christian believers, as Christ’s famous rebuke of Peter shows.”

3. Accusation

“Demonic agents italicize the defects of Christians and the churches in the minds of unbelievers and cause true Christianity to be branded with the image of its own worst exemplars They are also particularly active in dividing Christians from one another into parties Finally, satanic forces attack Christians directly in their own minds with disturbingly accurate accounts of their faults, seeking to discourage those who are most eager and able to work for the kingdom.”

4. Possession

“The Gospels plainly describe a condition in which human victims come almost helplessly under control of alien personalities.”

5. Physical attack

“From data in the Gospels it appears that demonic agents can occasionally cause illness, at least psychological and neurological ailments like dumbness and epilepsy.”

HT: Ray Ortlund

Our responsibility is clear: we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil in the world. The reality of this spiritual opposition, centered in a personal devil, is assumed throughout the Scriptures.

God's Word

Spirit's Power

Prayer In Christ's Name



Corporate

Christ our Confidence: *Christus*
Victor

The Kingdom

“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel.”

Mark 1:14-14

The response to Jesus' message of the kingdom of God being at hand?
Repent and believe in the gospel (Mk. 1:15)!

Question:

What do you think of when you hear the phrase “the kingdom of God”? How does Jesus use this term? Why do you think Jesus speaks of the kingdom’s arrival as good news?

- The hope of a king was woven into the fabric of Israel's story (Gen. 12:1-3; Dt. 17:14-20).
- Throughout the OT, kings come and go, each one pointing forward to the promised King who would bring final and everlasting hope and peace to the world.
- Jews expected a political king to come with majesty and power to overthrow the Romans and other Jewish oppressors.
- Though it was different than expected, Jesus did come to establish the kingdom!

Reflecting on the Kingdom of God” (Stephen J. Wellum, “Editorial: *SBJT* 12/1 (Spring 2008), 2-3.)

1. The kingdom of God refers to God’s *kingly rule*, and it is especially tied to God’s *saving reign*.
2. Scripture begins with the declaration that God, as Creator, is the sovereign ruler of the universe. In this important sense, the entire universe is God’s kingdom.
3. Given the Fall, everything changes. The rightful rule of God over the entire creation is now rejected by the human race. . . . the OT makes a distinction between the sovereignty of God over the entire creation and the coming of his *saving reign in the* context of a rebellious creation.

4. As the OT unfolds, God's kingdom, in this *saving sense, is revealed in a* number of ways.
5. The prophets hold out hope. The overall pattern of renewal is seen as a recapitulation of the past history of redemption: a new Exodus; a new covenant; a new Jerusalem; a new Davidic king to rule in a glorious and eternal kingdom.
6. It is against this background that the NT announces that, in Jesus, the long awaited kingdom has come and that the rule of sin and death has been destroyed. Thus, through Jesus' life and cross-work, he has *inaugurated the kingdom of God* over which he now rules and reigns. And, as the ascended King, he commands all people to repent and to enter that kingdom of life. But even though the kingdom has come, it still awaits its consummation.

- *The kingdom is God's reign.* The “kingdom of God” means primarily the rule of God, the divine kingly authority. This means that God's kingdom is a king-dominion, a dominion over which He is king, ruler, and authority.

- *The kingdom is soteriological* (soteria = salvation; logical = study of). The object of the divine rule is the redemption of men and women and their deliverance from the powers of evil.

- *The kingdom is dynamic.* The kingdom is not an abstract principle, the kingdom comes. It is God's rule actively invading the kingdom of Satan (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23-28; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 11:15).
 - The kingdom comes at the end of the age (Matt. 6:10; 25:31-46).
 - The kingdom has come into history (Matt. 12:28-29).
 - The Kingdom is supernatural (Matt. 19:28; Mk. 4:26-29).

- *The kingdom is a mystery.* The presence of the kingdom in history is a mystery (Mk. 4:11). Many parables are used to teach of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 13).

- *The kingdom is the realm of redemptive blessing.* The redemptive rule of God creates realms in which the blessings of the divine reign are enjoyed. There is both a present and future realm of the kingdom.

- *The kingdom is not the church.* Jesus and the apostles preached the kingdom of God, not the church. (Try to substitute “church” for “kingdom” in their preaching!) However, there is an inseparable relationship between them. The church is the fellowship of men and women who have accepted the offer of the kingdom, submitted to its rule, and entered into its blessings.
 - The kingdom of God creates the church.
 - The kingdom works through the church.

Walter E. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984). **G. E. Ladd, “Kingdom of Christ, God, Heaven”**

Kingdom language is used quite often today. There is significant misunderstanding of what it means. To quote from Ladd above, here is what we can say about the kingdom:

- “they can persuade men concerning the kingdom (Acts 19:8) . . .
- Men can receive the kingdom (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17) . . .
- Men can reject the kingdom and refuse to receive it or enter it (Matt. 23:13) . . .
- They can look for it (Luke 23:51), pray for its coming (Matt. 6:10), and seek it (Matt. 6:33) . . .
- The kingdom is altogether God’s deed although it works in and through men. Men may do things for the sake of the kingdom (Matt. 19:12; Luke 18:29), work for it (Col. 4:11), suffer for it (2 Thess. 1:5), but they are not said to act upon the kingdom itself. They can inherit it (Matt. 25:34; 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 15:50) . . .”

And here is what we cannot say/do regarding the kingdom:

- “but they cannot build it. It is God’s deed. . . .
- but they are never said to establish it. . . .
- but they cannot destroy it. . . .
- but they cannot bring it. . . .
- but they are not said to act upon the kingdom itself. . . .
- but they cannot bestow it upon others.”

Now let us examine the theme of the kingdom of God on the basis of the fact that we can discern its reality everywhere in Scripture. The kingdom of God involves three essential aspects: 1. The subjects of that rule, who are the people of God. 2. The sphere of that rule, which is the place where God is the unchallenged Lord among his people. 3. The ruling relationship by which God establishes the nature of His kingdom and its subjects according to His own eternal and unchanging character. We may summarize these elements by saying that we see in the Bible the concept of the kingdom of God involving: **God's people, in God's place, under God's rule.**

Graeme Goldsworthy, "The Kingdom of God and the Old Testament," section "The Unifying Theme of the Kingdom of God"

The Already and Not Yet of the Last Days

The OT prophets, writing from the vantage point of their present age (the time of promise), spoke of "the last days" as being the time of fulfillment in the distant future (e.g., Jer. 23:20; 49:39; Ezek. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Mic. 4:1).

The Structure of the OT Expectation of the Last Days



The NT (the time of fulfillment), however, locates "the last days" in the present age. The "last days" *already* began with the death and resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit, but they are *not yet* fully realized, which will happen only after Christ returns.

The NT Restructuring of the OT Expectation of the Last Days



Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

We believe that, in obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, and we believe that as we make disciples, we are always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed (Matt. 28:18-20; Lk. 24:45-49; Jn. 20:21; Acts 1:8; Rev. 7:9; Matt. 5:13-16).

- *Simple Church* (2006)
- *The Trellis and the Vine* (2009)



Bearing Witness to the Gospel and Making Disciples

Jesus' Command and Promise; Disciples' Call and Privilege

(Matt. 28:18-20; cf. Lk. 24:45-49; Jn. 20:21; Acts 1:8)

“Discipleship and evangelism are the weakest areas in the church. I cannot recall the last survey that showed other areas as the weakest. Again and again, these churches admit they struggle in doing evangelism and discipleship – two non-negotiable components of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20).”

Chuck Lawless, “[12 Findings from Church Health Surveys](#)”

- “All”: all authority, all nations, all I have commanded (everything), all the days (always).
- Jesus is the one through whom all God’s authority is mediated, he is the mediatorial king. His kingdom has dawned.
- “Therefore”: his universal authority serves as an end-time marker that ushers in the beginning of his universal mission.

- “Make disciples” is the mandate.
- Disciples are those who hear, understand and obey Jesus’ teaching.
- “Nations”: The aim is to make disciples of all men and women everywhere without distinction (cf. Matthew 1:1-17; 28:18-20; Gen. 12:1-3; Rev. 5:9-10; 7-9; 14:6, 22; contrast Rev. 13:5-10).

- Proclamation of the gospel results in repentance and faith.
Response of discipleship is baptism, instruction and obedience.
- Baptism into the name of the Trinity. This suggests strongly a coming-into-relationship-with or a coming-under-the-Lordship-of, a sign of both entrance into Messiah's covenant community and of pledged submission to his lordship.
- "Teach all I have commanded" which is truth applied to life.

- This begins with a command and ends with a promise: Jesus' presence. Note the promise/presence is tied to obedience to Jesus' command.
- The Gospel of Matthew is not a closed book until the consummation. The final chapter is being written in the mission and teaching of Jesus' disciples.
- Christianity must spread by an internal necessity or it has already decayed. Failure to disciple, baptize, and teach the peoples of the world is already itself one of the failures of our own discipleship.



Disciple

As we fight *against* the spiritual forces of evil, we are also contending *for* the cause of Christ and the kingdom of God. As followers of Christ we have been commissioned to engage the world with the gospel and to make disciples of Jesus Christ among all people. Our marching orders as believers have come from the Lord Jesus himself. His final words to his disciples as recorded in Matthew's Gospel make this clear: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).



All People

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Rev. 7:9-10)



Bearing Witness in Word and Deed

Words often attributed to Francis of Assisi are frequently quoted in this regard: “Preach the gospel all the time; if necessary use words.” This is misstated, for our words are necessary, just as God’s words are necessary for us to understand his message. But it is true, nonetheless, that how we live provides the context for the content of the message we proclaim. It provides the music that accompanies the lyrics of the gospel—the music which helps to display the beauty of those lyrics to the world. Thus, proclaiming the gospel in words and living the gospel through loving service to others ought to go hand in hand. Actions without words are insufficient, but words without actions lack credibility. We declare God’s love to the world with more power when we also demonstrate that love in how we live.

“[God] has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” (2 Tim. 1:9). The same grace of God that takes away our sin also gives us new life—a life that reflects a new desire to love God and love our neighbor, to enter into the spiritual battle and to obey Christ’s Great Commission. God’s gospel, by its very nature, compels us to Christ-like living and witness to the world.