



THE FALL *and* RISE *of* CHRISTIAN STANDARDS

by David Kidd

Since I first came into the conservative, “plain” circles, I have been continually challenged by the lifestyles and commitments of the churches and families that I have met. Coming from my background, I quickly noticed that these churches have been able to go forward with a clear direction, address sin, and deal with worldly compromise like churches from my background could only dream of. I have frequently pondered the fundamental differences that lie between these conservative churches and the modern evangelical churches. Both groups lift up faith in Jesus as the basis of salvation, both groups claim to believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. So why the vast difference in practice between these so-called Bible-believing churches? The history of Israel, portrayed through the Old Testament, demonstrates that when the nation was suffering from corruption, compromise and backsliding, the reason could almost always be traced back down to a glaring neglect of some fundamental, biblical principle.

Likewise today, it has become obvious that the secular slide of modern evangelicalism is also evidence of a neglect of some fundamental biblical principles. Several fundamentals could be mentioned, but one of the most obviously neglected principles would be the biblical teaching of discipleship and properly applied church standards. Unfortunately, these principles have such political and emotional baggage connected with them that they can hardly even be discussed without causing indignation and alarm.

When I first made plans to attend Charity Christian Fellowship, I was warned by several well-meaning brothers not to attend because they “had no

standards.” After I got there, I heard this idea passed around among a few of the members; and frankly, at first it really was almost funny to me. To an ex-evangelical who grew up with “Christian” rock, worldly entertainments of all kinds, mixed water slide parties, extravagant and immodest clothing, flagrantly unscriptural dating practices, etc., etc.—the idea that we “had no standards” was ridiculous to me! Indeed, it was plainly evident by my observation that there were very clear standards in place. The preachers were able to call sin *—sin*, and even to be specific about what that sin was. Issues and concerns were brought up in brother’s meetings, and decisions were able to be made, with clear direction given. I watched brothers bow their hearts to one another’s conviction like I never knew was even possible. For me, I saw that this church was experiencing the fruit of a biblical fundamental that was grossly lacking from my background.

So where did this idea of “no standards” come from? It was not until I began to become acquainted with many of the “Old Order” groups that I realized what the brothers were calling “standards.” In some of these groups, church rules were collections of century old written statements, mandating everything from tractor tires to bow ties. Furthermore, once the standards were written, some of these churches no longer felt the need to teach the principles behind them, and so naturally, a merely outward submission was maintained. It is this mindset and idea of “standards” that “Charity churches” have rightfully wanted to avoid.

The difference in explanation and understanding on these issues demonstrates the principle that



the need for definition is critically important for any group to be able to communicate effectively. A definition for the word “standards” is certainly one of those areas of need among us, especially as we fellowship and minister among other conservative and Old Order groups. How to articulate the ideas of having a clear direction for a church, that is not afraid to speak out specifically about modern issues and sins, while not going the way of a static, unchangeable paper mandate with no life or flexibility, is a needed objective.

I believe that the book, *The Fall and Rise of Christian Standards*, by David Kidd, offers refreshing discussion and insight into this volatile topic. Written by a Baptist pastor, the book obviously comes from someone who has felt the pain of worldliness in the Church. While holding clearly to a salvation by grace through faith, David Kidd has dared to preach what “grace” should be doing in the lives of true believers. But don’t let the word “standards” scare you off. David Kidd’s use of the word is a bit different than what is generally spoken of in plain circles. Nonetheless, his driving point is that the Church today should be able to speak out clearly, distinctly, and purposely against the lures and enticements of the world.

At the beginning of the book, David Kidd laments over the loss of clear, biblical absolutes in the Church today. He writes:

As the culture continues its subversive war on righteous standards, Christianity has abandoned some of its most precious treasures. Decency is sacrificed, wholesomeness forfeited, discreteness surrendered, all for the precarious pleasure of dancing with the wolf of fad and fashion even while it gorges itself on these sacred virtues.

The crown gems of modesty, femininity and dignified Christian manhood, once a badge of honor,



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are thoughtlessly traded for the ludicrous, daring and indecent designs of a self-indulgent, and sensuous culture. From pants for women to earrings for men, Christianity was at first shocked, then merely shook its head, eventually shrugged, and finally nodded as it accepted and adapted to the latest fashion phenomenon. Each time, it loses another gem of virtue from its divinely given treasury. Another foundation, and a precious one at that, is crumbling even as we speak. A devilish anesthesia numbs us to the priceless loss.

Offering a warning against empty standards, Kidd writes that the worldly drift of the modern Church today evolved from the practice of keeping strong outward standards, with no biblical teaching. He says,

Many Christians schools and churches were measured by how high their standards were, while there was little if any instruction regarding the biblical principles upon which those standards were based. Though perhaps not

intentionally, biblical principles were ignored while external standards were exalted. Today, we see the next generation reacting to this arbitrary imposition of standards by rejecting them as legalistic, opting instead for the freedom of living under grace while forgetting about the standards biblical principles demand. This tragic comedy of errors, resulting in a brand of Christianity that is virtually indistinguishable from the culture, could almost be humorous were it not for the nightmarish consequences.

Considering the idea of “separation,” as spoken of in 2 Cor. 6:17, where the Bible says, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,” David Kidd wrote:



A BOOK REVIEW BY DEAN TAYLOR



This is one of those powder keg passages in which lighting a candle to illuminate its truth places you at ground zero of an inevitable explosion. A pastor who stands firmly for the principle of separation in the church regarding emotionally supercharged issues like dress or music, is likely to find himself smoldering amidst ruins that were once his ministry.

Speaking of the embarrassing and scandalous attitude of the Church, which he sees as literally chasing after the ways of the world, Kidd writes,

As our culture, and the clothes it wears moves steadily on a deviant, and rebellious path, it should be leaving the church of Christ in a cloud of fashion dust. Alas, the church, rather than being content to look like the stranger and pilgrim it claims to be, has picked up the latest fad quicker than the world can shed it for a new one. Do you suppose that as the world invents and adopts the latest style, unconscious of the spiritual war in which they themselves are the prize, it may occasionally turn around to find the church wearing their same garments and chuckle to itself, "Hey, look who is following us?"

This is not one of those books which merely criticizes, offering no remedy. Kidd proposes radical changes in the modern Church today in keeping with the clear teachings of the Word of God. The scriptural theme woven throughout the book is Nehemiah's rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Kidd sees this as analogous to the need for bringing back biblical standards, discipleship, and clear direction, just as the Church once had centuries ago.

The words of Nehemiah, as he viewed the ruins of the wall of Jerusalem, are a fitting description for the 21st century church which has adapted to the world's fashions and foolishness, losing its own glorious luster in the trade-off. "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire..." (Neh. 2:17). As our increasingly corrupt society has chipped away at the fundamentally Christian principles of modesty, gender distinction, decency and discreteness, the church has failed to recognize that with each subtle accommodation, these foundational Christian values are compromised. Like the wall of Jerusalem, they lie in

ruins. This book is a call and a plan to reclaim and rebuild these lost, forfeited and forgotten Christian virtues.

Like Nehemiah, we must begin by surveying the sobering reality of these ruins. The work begins by clearing away the rubble of misconception that has allowed the church to comfortably live in the world's trendy fashions. Foundational principles are laid and building begins with cornerstones of biblical truth, logic, reason and example. The task is immense, but its success is imperative.

The bride of Christ is allowing itself to be dragged through the cultural muck of fad and fashion. God intends better for us. Our motive for reconstructing a biblical view of righteous standards ought to be the same as Nehemiah's for rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, "that we be no more a reproach" (Neh. 2:17).

In general, I found this book informative, thought provoking, and convincing. I do not know of another book that deals with these issues with as much clarity and biblical support as this one. David Kidd's arguments are clearly articulated and present a much needed "sounding of the trumpet" about this very sensitive and grossly neglected topic. Certainly, there are a few things in the book that I would have said differently, and of course in the end, we have even ended up in a different place than the personal standards that he mentions in the back of the book. Nevertheless, his well thought-out argument for recovering the lost gems of Christian standards, while boldly addressing and graphically exposing the tremendous need that exists in the Church today in this area, uniquely sets this book apart as "one of a kind." □

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