

# THE NEED FOR LIBERALISM AND PROVOCATION

## Introduction

- 1) The title of this sermon is not a misprint, nor have I taken leave of my senses (Acts 26:24)
- 2) There is a particular need for **liberalism** and **provocation** among faithful Christians today
  - a) How do I know this? The Bible tells me so!
  - b) The fact is, there is both a positive and negative aspect to these characteristics, though the positive is *rarely* emphasized
- 3) Consider carefully what the Bible says about the pros and cons of these traits and consider if you are displaying the proper kind of **liberalism** and **provocation** in your life

## I) **LIBERALISM**

Definition: *favoring progress and reform, tolerant, not strict; generous, bountiful*

A) **Liberalism** is bad when it ignores the revealed boundaries of biblical authority

- 1) We have “the faith” (God’s word) to guide us and identify error (Jude 3-4)
- 2) The word of God cannot be annulled or amended by man’s wisdom (Prov. 22:28; 30:5-6; 1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19)
- 3) God does not tolerate us progressing “beyond” the doctrine of Christ (2 Jn. 9)
- 4) The way to life is a “narrow” way (Matt. 7:14), but liberalism prefers the “broad” way (v. 13)

B) **Liberalism** is good when it describes great *generosity* and *abundance*

- 1) God is very liberal in His giving (Mal. 3:10; Lk. 6:38)
- 2) God is pleased with a generous, liberal spirit of giving (Rom. 12:8)
- 3) Early Christians were liberal in their help for other saints (2 Cor. 8:1-3; 9:6-13)
- 4) Be more willing to give than to receive (Acts 20:35); there is a greater blessing in it!
- 5) We can also be liberal with the time and attention we give to people and issues

## II) **PROVOCATION**

Definition: *act or effect of provoking; incitement, agitation; motivation, stimulus*

A) **Provocation** is bad when it serves to irritate and stir up wrath and anger (contention)

- 1) Not a characteristic of true love – irritable, easily angered, quick tempered (1 Cor. 13:5)
- 2) Causes contention in our homes (Col. 3:21) and in the church (1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3)
- 3) “Contentions” (strife, discord) is a destructive work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20; Prov. 20:2-3)
  - a) Anger stirs up wrath and contentions (Prov. 15:18; 22:24-25; Jas. 1:19-20)

B) **Provocation** is good when it is motivating righteous thinking and action

- 1) We are to “stir up” (*provoke* KJV/ASV, *stimulate* NASV, *spur on* NIV) one another unto love and good works (Heb. 10:24)
- 2) We are “stirred up” by gospel preaching and teaching (2 Pet. 1:13 “thought-provoking”)
  - a) The remnant of Israel was stirred up to work by God’s prophets (Hag. 1:14)
- 3) We should be provoked in our spirits about falsehoods and evil (Acts 17:16)

## Conclusion

Are you a **liberal** and **provocative** person in the way that would please God? Examine your life and serve God faithfully each day.