

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Church and Last Things, Session 9, Marks of the Church, Ecclesiastical Separation, and Biblical Principles Concerning Error**

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Doctrines of the Church and Last Things. This is session 9, Marks of the Church, Ecclesiastical Separation, and Biblical Principles Concerning Error.

We turn in our lectures now from the attributes of the church to the marks of the church.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you are the Lord of the church. We thank you that you have made us a part of your people. Work in us, encourage us, we pray. Correct us where we need that, lead us in your everlasting way. We pray in your holy name. Amen.

We talked about the attributes of the church, which were patristic, defining, and confessional matters. There's one holy Catholic and apostolic church. Now, we move to the marks of the church, which is a polemical, reformational matter.

At the end, there are three marks. Luther, at one point, talked about the seven marks of the church: preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the keys. He's referring to Matthew 18; he means discipline, the calling of ministers, prayer, public worship, and possession of the Holy Cross; his words, by that, he meant persecution. I point that out to say that Luther wasn't really claiming that to be a number that should be used in the life of the church, but that the reformers were thinking along these terms.

In Calvin's own Geneva, Geneva Confession of 1536, part of that was this, article 18, the proper mark, singular, it's Latin, *notae*, plural, *notae*, the proper mark by which rightly to discern the church of Jesus Christ is that his holy gospel be purely and faithfully preached, proclaimed, heard, and kept, that his sacraments be properly administered, even if there be some imperfections and faults, as there always will be among men. He says mark, and he puts the gospel first, but then he includes the sacraments and notice there was no mention of discipline yet. As a matter of fact, there's debate in Calvin's studies as to whether he included discipline; he thought discipline was important; there's no debate there, but everybody agrees he had word and sacraments as the first two marks. His tradition certainly added discipline. It's a question beyond our interest right now, our concern right now, as to whether Calvin had the third mark of discipline.

The standard confessional exposition of the marks is from the Belgic Confession of 1561, authored by Guido de Bray. It's an apology, a defense, for persecuted reformed Christians in the lowlands, the Belgic Confession, and as we said before, it's part of the three forms of unity, along with the Heidelberg Confession and the Canons of Dort, of the reformed churches. The Westminster Standards are the doctrinal symbols for the Presbyterian churches.

Belgic Confession, article 29, we believe that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully by the word of God what is the true church, for all sects in the world today claim for themselves the name of the church. We're not speaking here of the company of hypocrites who are mixed among the good in the church and who nonetheless are not part of it, even though they are physically there, but we are speaking of distinguishing the body and fellowship of the true church from all sects that call themselves the church. He's not only opposing Rome but also radical reformation; we talk about the magisterial reformers Luther, Beza, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, who had the support of the state and the prince.

The radical reformers were a motley crew, and there were enough errors and bizarre stuff in the radical reformation that Luther and Calvin didn't discern the truth and the false there; interestingly, although there was so much false because the radical reformation included anti-Trinitarians, that was a capital offense in the 16th century. It included apocalyptic fanatics taking over cities in the name of the Lord. It included, is hard to believe, but 16th-century nudism and polygamy, claiming to go back to the book of the Garden of Eden for the former and to the patriarchal period for the latter.

Anyway, it is wrong; they were wrong, but it's understandable for the reformers to condemn all the Anabaptists of the radical reformation. It was wrong, but it's unfortunately what they did. So the Belgian Confession is trying to distinguish between the true reformational church, which they regard as the Catholic or universal church, and not only Rome, but all these; they call them sects, the radical reformation, the enthusiasts is another name they used.

The true church can be recognized if it has the following marks. This is the definitive symbolic, confessional statement. The church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel.

It makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. It practices church discipline for correcting faults. Those are the three marks of the church.

In short, it governs itself according to the pure word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only head. Is that a jab at Rome? You

bet it is. By these marks, one can be assured of recognizing the true church and no one ought to be separated from it.

As for those who belong to the church, we can recognize them by the distinguishing marks of Christians. This is unique to the Belgian confession. And over the years, my students found it new and refreshing, not only marks of the church but marks of Christians, namely by faith and by fleeing from sin and pursuing righteousness.

Faith, righteousness. Once they have received the one and only Savior Jesus Christ, notice godliness follows faith in the gospel. They love, faith and righteousness and love the true God and their neighbors without turning to the right or left, and they crucify the flesh and its works.

Though great weakness remains in them, true Christians, that is, fight against it by the spirit, capital S, all the days of their lives, appealing constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of the Lord Jesus, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in him. As for the false church, guess what that is? It assigns more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the word of God. It does not want to subject itself to the yoke of Christ.

It does not administer the sacraments as Christ commanded in his word. It rather adds to them, Romans 7, or subtracts from them some of the radical reformers, as it pleases. It bases itself on men more than on Jesus Christ.

It persecutes those who live lives according to the word of God and rebuke it for its faults, greed, and idolatry. These two churches are easy to recognize and thus to distinguish from each other. Scott's confession has relevant information.

Westminster standard never specifically mentions the marks but also has relevant information. It is the Belcher confession that gives these three marks of the church. What about biblical rationale? As far as the word goes, as a matter of fact, both word and Christian baptism are mentioned in Jesus' great commission to the church.

The great commission is very important. The risen Christ, in his last words to the church, before he ascends to the Father, gives this commission. It is preceded by his statement that he has universal authority.

It is followed by the promise of his presence forever. All authority, Matthew 28, 18, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go there and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I'm with you always to the end of the age. Teaching them the great commission is a commission to evangelism, implied, discipleship, explicit, baptism,

the initial sacrament of the two, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. And specifically, again, the word, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Another good proof passage for the word of God being primary is 2 Timothy 4:2, where Paul tells his understudy that he charges him. This is serious business, too. So, both great commissions are solemn and important.

Likewise, there's a charge from an apostle to an apostolic delegate. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom. I mean, we're talking serious business here, right? Preach the word.

Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching. All of that is an expansion and an application of preaching the word.

I agree with the notion, and the reformed churches have accepted it. Evangelicalism, in general, although not as explicitly as sometimes we could, they could, they could, we could, I'm an evangelical, has accepted the three marks. Let it be clearly said that the first mark is the basis of the other two.

The word is the most important mark of the church. As a matter of fact, the sacraments are visible words. We see it in the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:23, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The observance of the Lord's Supper with the words of the institution is a proclamation of the Lord's death. It's a proclamation of the atonement. It is a preaching of the gospel in symbolism in this ceremony.

The Lord's Supper is a ceremonial preaching of the gospel, and so is Christian baptism, which communicates union with Christ and cleansing and reception of the Holy Spirit. I'm not saying those things are automatically conveyed in baptism. I'm saying that's what baptism means.

Same with the Lord's Supper. It signifies, most of all, union with Christ and also justification, sanctification, and adoption. All those things are not automatically conferred but promised by God and received by faith.

So, there are three marks, but there's really one primary mark, the word. Discipline, the third mark, is an application of the word from Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5, and so forth. The word is the primary mark.

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are also a mark of the Church. I call them an application of the word. The Great Commission commands Jesus and contains Jesus' exhortation to baptize in the name of the Trinity.

In Matthew 26, 26 through 28, Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11, 23 to 26, he does Paul's recollection of the same thing that was revealed to him by the Lord, he says. These are not options.

We acknowledge our brothers and sisters who believe in Christ in something like the Salvation Army as fellow believers. We lament the fact that they don't observe the Christian sacraments. That's a serious omission, and based on historical standards, it falls short of the definition of a true Church.

I'm not saying people can't be saved in such an entity. I'm saying it lacks one of the marks of the Church, and the mainline Christian denominations, by and large, have lacked the mark of discipline for so many years. It's a very sad thing when a minister of the gospel was ordained in the old United Presbyterian Church who openly denied the deity of Christ, and that was permitted by a presbytery and not taken to task, not reversed by the General Assembly.

That is a fatal lack of discipline. Am I saying everybody in the mainline churches is unsaved? I am not saying that. I'm saying if they don't observe discipline in the biblical fashion, which is not only commanded but is to be gently and pastorally administered, they are falling short of the marks of the Church.

Discipline, we see in Matthew 18, where Jesus gives instructions, if your brother sins against you, go to him personally; Matthew 18:15 to 17, try to work it out. If you can't, bring a witness or two. If you can't, if he still doesn't hear you, you bring it to the Church, which I would take to mean you bring it to the officers of the Church, the elders of the Church, and it becomes a Church, a more Church-wide manner, and discipline is to be administered to help the person who has sinned also to maintain the health of the body, but most of all, as in all things, for the glory of God.

The three purposes of discipline, for example, were taught by the Reformer John Calvin. First Corinthians 5, Paul can't believe it. It isn't even heard among the Gentiles, among the unsaved people, the Gentiles, and those outside the covenant that a man lives with his stepmother the way a man lives with his wife.

Put the man out. All discipline is intended to be remedial, and God might use it to reclaim the person. I knew a story of a woman and the elders of a Bible-believing Church.

Well, first of all, it went through the steps, and it got to the elders, okay? It didn't work with the first two steps. Person, uh-uh. Two or three people, no.

The elders exhorted, met with her, and sent her letters. Finally, at the end of the whole process, she would never listen. She would never repent.

With sadness and maybe tears, they excommunicated her, which means we're not judging your salvation, but from your ongoing lack of repentance to explicit biblical appeals, you are denied access to the Lord's Supper, which means you're living like an unsaved woman. Finally, it broke her. She repented.

It was sad. It took all their energy and effort and hours and work. Nevertheless, they were faithful elders, and the Lord used it to bring about healing in this woman's life and in the lives of others she had negatively affected.

The Word has priority. There are three marks, but sacraments and discipline are applications of the Word. The Word teaches and governs discipline.

The Word is essential for the sacraments. You can have all the water you want. If you don't have the Word, the words, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it is not a Christian baptism.

You can have all the bread and grape juice or wine you want without the words of institution. It is not the Lord's Supper. Sacraments must have the Word to make an effective sacrament.

Marks of the Church deserve more, but we will bring up more in our excursus, which comes up now. Three marks: the pure preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the sacraments. I am a retired teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church of America, and I believe in household baptisms.

I do believe in the baptism of children. What about in the Book of Acts? That's a situation where the gospel comes to a culture. Of course, adults are baptized because they were, they were saved.

There was not even one example in the Book of Acts of a second-generation situation. In any case, am I saying Baptists are not properly administering the sacraments? I'm not saying that. I'm saying the sacraments are rightly administered by a lawfully ordained minister of the gospel, using water, whether poured, sprinkled, or dunked.

I personally prefer pouring. John the Baptist predicted that Jesus would pour out the Holy Spirit on the church. I baptize with water.

He'll baptize with the Spirit. Jesus does it in Acts 2. The method he uses is pouring. It's hard for me to say Jesus did it wrong.

Am I saying dunking is wrong? I'm not saying that. I'm not saying sprinkling is wrong. We don't have time to give biblical arguments for all three.

There are arguments, but I'm saying this. Christian baptism is rightly administered as a mark if it's done by a minister of the gospel in the name of the Trinity with water and the words, I baptize you and so forth—ecclesiastical separation.

First of all, some terms. Terminology is important. Apostasy, heresy, and schism.

Apostasy is the abandonment or renunciation of Christianity, either voluntarily or by compulsion. As a matter of fact, a bigger definition is the renunciation of a faith once professed. So, it is conceivable to talk about an apostate Mormon or an apostate Buddhist.

Our context is Christian. So, apostasy is denying the Christian faith once professed. An apostate is somebody who does that.

And the verb form is apostatize, not apostatize, if that matters to you. If you're a grammar Nazi like I am, in any case, it's not the same as heresy. That definition I gave is from the New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, by the way.

Heresy, a concise dictionary of Christian theology, Millard Erickson says, is a belief or teaching that contradicts scripture and Christian theology. I love Millard Erickson. I love his Christian theology book.

I used it for many years in my teaching. He was just a prince of the church. He's a godly man.

So much he has done so much good. I'm about to disagree with him, as you can tell. He and I have, I spoke at a conference once in which he was the keynoter.

He gave me the right hand of fellowship, and I did the same eagerly. But, if heresy is simply a belief or teaching that contradicts scripture and Christian theology, well, how can I say it? Erickson's a Baptist. I'm a paedo-Baptist.

Erickson is a pre-millennialist. I don't have a big stake in any of those things, but I would lean toward more amillennialism. He believes in congregational government.

I believe in rule by elders. Somebody is wrong. And I'm happy to say Millard might be right in all three, but that's not my point right now.

Obviously, I have convictions for what I teach and what I believe, although I don't hold everything with equal conviction. And some of those matters are not as

important to me as some other ones, but that's another story for another day. But here's the point.

We disagree on those three issues. One of us is wrong. Maybe we're both wrong.

Maybe he's wrong on one, and I'm wrong on two. I don't know, but we wouldn't call each other heretics. So, my definition is stronger.

A belief or teaching that contradicts the gospel. Heresy is not just an error. As you'll see in a moment, we all have errors.

It is a damning error. Boy, we shouldn't throw around that word heretic. Brothers and sisters in Christ who disagree with us concerning Christian baptism, the millennium or church government are not heretics.

More about that in a minute. Schism, which is the proper pronunciation, is a formal and willful separation from the unity of the church. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.

I earlier quoted from the Evangelical Dictionary of the Christian Church, New International Dictionary. That's better for some American stuff and people and movements. As you might imagine, the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church is better for some British stuff, people, and movements.

Terminology, apostasy, abandoning the Christian faith once professed. That's what is warned against in Hebrews 6 and 10. Heresy is a damning belief denying the deity of Christ.

SISM, separation from the church. Theological perspective on degrees of error has helped my students over the years very much, very much. We distinguish between the biblical teaching; we'll call the truth.

Errors, isolated errors. Is ever an error isolated? Maybe, maybe not. Systemic or systematic errors are errors that run through a system, then a major cleft, a major break, and then heresy.

Churches, I'm quoting David Jones, senior professor of theology at Covenant Seminary during my years there. He retired before I did and now is with the Lord. Quote: churches are more or less apostolic, that is, doctrinally pure or orthodox, according to the doctrine of the gospel that is taught and embraced in them.

Even the purest churches are subject to error, as the reformers plainly taught. Yet some are more faithful than others in confessing the system of doctrine taught in the holy scriptures. Systemic heresies are hardly distinguishable from apostasy.



That is, a person who believes that Jesus is not God, whether they darken the doors of a religious institution or not, they're heretics, and that is the equivalent of apostasy. They've denied the true faith by believing an error. Let me work through these.

Biblical teaching is the deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the incarnation of Christ, and the fact that Jesus is coming again. The apostle's creed summarizes an almost universally accepted summary of biblical teaching. Errors.

I once used to assign a book for hermeneutics, The name escapes me at the moment; maybe it'll come. It's not that important right now, but in that book the author, two authors said McCartney and Clayton, McCartney and Clayton's hermeneutics book, misinterpreting a verse in God's holy bible is a sin. I used to give true and false quizzes on readings sometimes to make sure students read them and read the assignments, and this book was amazing to me. Every student read that statement; every student understood that statement, and half the students, although I'd say true or false, misinterpreting a verse in the bible is a sin, half of them said false.

Why? The assignment was according to McCartney and Clayton; perhaps the name of the book lets the reader understand something like that. They knew what it said, but they didn't like it, so half of them said thumbs down and lost one on the quiz. They were smart; they knew I gave them a couple of freebies anyway, but are they not right, McCartney and Clayton? It's God's word.

Would any human being, any preacher, any teacher claim to know it all? What I'm trying to say is, my friends, this is one of my two purposes in teaching this degree of error chart: we all have errors. That's a humbling thing, that's a humbling thing. James 3, before it begins the section on the tongue, which is a metonymy for speech, the tongue is the organ of speech, the primary organ of speech, says, let not many of you become teachers, my brothers because we will endure stricter judgment.

This is serious business. We all have errors. It ought to humble us who handle the word of God and its teachings, right? We don't know it all.

It also ought to make us distinguish majors from minors, and that's what this chart helps do. We all have errors. If I knew my errors, I would repent of them immediately, and that is the right verb, repent of errors.

So, we all have errors. As a matter of fact, a large number of us have systemic errors, and I'm going to name and use examples concerning errors here. Like I say, as godly and orthodox a man as Millard Erickson and I disagree.

Would I consider my view of the millennium a major issue? I would not. My view of baptism is that I would not. I think Christian baptism is very important, but I receive a Baptist baptism as a valid baptism.

I would hope my Baptist friends would return the favor. And church government, all church government, John Frame is right, is a combination of congregationalism ruled by elders and so forth, and being led by pastors. It's a combination, but I do believe in rule by elders, but would I regard that as important as the inerrancy of the Bible or the dignity of Christ? No, I wouldn't.

But Erickson and I have errors in those matters because we disagree. Neither of us would condemn the other. Systemic error is worse.

It is an error that runs through a whole system of doctrine. I co-authored a book with Michael Williams called *Why I'm Not an Arminian*. Jerry Walls and Joseph Donjell wrote a book *Why I'm Not a Calvinist*.

As a matter of fact, they did it first. It's a long story; not going to get into it. But we love each other and accept each other in the Lord.

If they're right, my Calvinism is an Arminianism is a systemic error. But here's the point. None of us regard each other as heretics.

So, guess what, my friend? Friends, we all have errors. Humble yourself before the Lord. Don't bash your brothers and sisters and call them heretics because they have a different view of the millennium or some other details of the faith.

If they have a different view of the deity of Christ, they're outside of the faith. It is possible to be a cultist and be saved only if you believe contrary to the teachings of the cult. Galatians, I'll make my point with appeals to Galatians 1 and Philippians 1. Galatians 1, Paul says if an angel from heaven or an apostle, this is impossible, preaches a different gospel, let him be damned, anathema.

He says it twice for emphasis. That is the word of God in the gospel. It's a mark of the church.

It stands over even the apostles or angels if they would preach something else. Philippians 1, Paul's in prison. Some true brothers apparently are definitely preaching.

I think they're true brothers. They're definitely preaching a true gospel to get ahead of Paul. You say that is sick.

It's sick. What's Paul's response? He praises the Lord. Why? Isn't he hurt? Probably.

Does that matter? Not that much. Why? Because they're preaching the true gospel. Their attitudes are certainly terrible, but in that, they're preaching the true gospel, he rejoices.

Galatians 1, you preach a different gospel, woe unto you. So, we all have errors. Humble yourself before the Lord.

Study hard to understand the system of biblical doctrine. But show charity and love toward those who disagree with you on some of those things. I'll say it again.

The same similar things I said when I studied the unity of the church. What do I, Peterson, a Calvinist, have in common with Arminians? What do I, a open to the Holy Spirit but non-charismatic or Pentecostal Christian, have in common with charismatic or Pentecostal Christians? What do I, a covenant theologian, have in common with dispensational theologians? A lot. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The blood of Christ. The person and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Some things with variation, of course, of understanding.

And so forth. Good grief. Let us get our ducks in a row and not call one another heretics over relatively minor issues.

There's more to this. There are biblical principles involved. It is the duty of pastors to protect the flock by holding fast to the truth.

Acts 20 scandalizes me. Paul tells the Ephesian elders, it's sort of a proto-presbytery, meeting him in Miletus. From among you will come ferocious wolves attacking the flock.

What? Acts 20, 28 to 31. Does he mean from the very number of men in front of him? Maybe, but I sure hope not. I hope he means from their churches.

Ah, the former would be so grievous. Ah. It is the duty of pastors to protect the flock by holding fast to the gospel.

Titus 1-9 tells qualifications for elders. Not only does 1 Timothy 3 do that, but Titus 1 does as well. And Paul says the elder; he calls him the bishop or overseer.

The words are used, it seems to me, in a parallel fashion. Pastor or shepherd, bishop, overseer, elder or elder. Elder.

Titus 1:9. The overseer must hold firmly to the trustworthy word as taught by the apostle Paul to Titus. And he gives two results of that.

One, the elder loves. The other one, he reluctantly has to do. The bishop must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.

I rejoice to be able to do these lectures for [biblicalelearning.org](http://biblicalelearning.org), even as I rejoice to teach the gospel and more theology to believers in Ukraine through the ministry RITE, Reformed International Theological Education. What a blessing to help their brothers and sisters, especially now that their country is at war. I rejoice to serve as a theological consultant for child evangelism.

All those things rejoice my heart. I do not rejoice in having to oppose an error, but I do have to oppose an error. The elder must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

If somebody enjoys that too much, they disqualify themselves from the eldership because elders are not to be feisty, but they have to fight. They don't want to fight, but they have to fight sometimes. That's why it's Titus 1:9, Acts 20:28-31.

We're not going to turn there, but 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul says, watch your life and your doctrine closely. Heretics, if they are moral, ought to leave the church. You can't count on it, and maybe even their motives aren't good.

1 John 2:18-20, right around in there. They went out from us, the antichrists, because they did not really belong to us. If they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us, but their going out showed that none of them belonged to us.

1 John 2:18-19, heretics ought to leave the church, but what do we do if they won't leave? That is a very good question. Churches should discipline heretics who will not leave. This is harder to prove than you might think.

Titus 3:10 and 11 says, it gives instructions, not technically for heretics, but for divisive persons. Titus 3:10, as for a person who stirs up the vision, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him. Knowing such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned.

Titus 2:10 and 11. 2 Peter 2:1-3 condemns the false teachers. 2 Peter 2:1-3 and verse 9 just excoriates them.

It doesn't technically say put them out, but surely, and back again to Galatians 1, if anybody preaches a different gospel, Galatians 1:6-9, let him be accursed. So, I can't exactly find a verse that says it, but surely it is a good and logical conclusion from biblical teaching. Churches should discipline heretics who will not leave.

Titus 3:10 and 11 gives the parallel instruction for disciplining divisive people. 2 Peter 2:1-3 and 9 condemns false teachers. Galatians 1:6-9 does the same.

It condemns them to hell. So here are the biblical principles. Pastors should protect the flock by holding fast to the truth, including rebuking errors.

Secondly, heretics, if they are, if they have integrity, ought to leave the church. Tell you a funny story. A friend of mine, Alan Gomes, edited. Here's a good advertisement for him: Zondervan's Whatever It Is, 16 volumes on guides for the world's religions and cults.

Gomes is a number of things. He's a very good historical theologian. He's also a cult expert.

He's an expert on the UUs, the universal Unitarians, and really all the cults, but he specializes in some of that. Oh yes, the UUs. He tells a story of he tells a story, amazing thing: Unitarian Universalist churches.

Do you understand what these people don't believe? They don't believe Jesus is God. They don't believe in hell. I don't even know if they believe in any kind of a heaven or new heavens and new earth.

They are really way outside the pale of orthodoxy. Well, guess what? UU churches are growing using church growth principles. It's just it's kind of sad.

It shows if you give coffee and donuts and you're friendly, you can draw people in even to heretical situations. And here's, here is a hilarious thing. It's kind of sick, but it's funny.

Gomes says some of the older UUs don't like the church growth principles being used to gain adherence because, quote, they're even telling people about Jesus. That is, some of them have integrity and will not compromise their heresies, denying the deity of Christ. Oh my goodness.

Christian churches ought to discipline heretics who won't leave. Christians ought to separate from a church that rejects the marks of the church. That is not a that's a hard thing for me to say, but I say it as an evangelical theologian.

Second Samuel six, our own church here, covenant of grace church in St. Charles. Our pastor is Dr. Van Lees, who preaches the word of God through books, one book of the Bible after another, plainly explaining the Bible with love and joy in his heart, plainly setting forth the truth when when he comes to a passage on errors. So he does.

The parents of a friend of mine were visiting the church. They were going to another church whose name I will not reveal in this video. And he, he, the passage before him spoke of false teaching and heresies in the last days.

And he let it fly, let it rip. And after his sermon, the dear mother said, man and his wife, she said, we hear that every week in our church. And I said, why don't you leave it? And they did.

She heard heresy characteristic of the last days, every week in their churches preaching. Oh, my word. Christians stayed there for years because of fellowship and caring about others, and they were true believers, but the teaching was bad.

The teaching was denying the gospel and the need for the gospel. Christians ought to separate from a church that rejects the marks of the church. 2 Corinthians 6:14 on through 7:1 is the classical text.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? What fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial, an intertestamental name for the devil? What proportion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of a living God. As God said, I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them.

I will be their God. They'll be my people. Therefore, go out from their midst and be separate from them, says the Lord.

Touch no unclean thing, and I will welcome you. I'll be a father to you. You'll be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. The unequal yoke passage, 6:14 of 2 Corinthians, is often used of marriage. It does not, in the first instance, speak of marriage.

It speaks of spiritual union. Paul could not be more emphatic. Repeatedly, I lost count. Is it six times? He uses a word that speaks of belief, a word that speaks of unbelief, and a word that speaks of union.

You believers, implied, be not unequally yoked, union with unbelievers. What partnership, the union word, has righteousness, faith, with lawlessness, unbelief. What fellowship, the union word, has light, believers, and darkness.

I'll stop. It just keeps going. He's being emphatic by saying it over and over again.

Come out from among them, believers; of course, they should be friends with unbelievers. How in the world would unbelievers come to faith? But believers are to separate from unbelief. Again, am I talking about details of the faith? I am not talking about details of the faith.

I'm talking about denying the way of salvation, denying the deity of Christ, denying the fundamentals of the faith. In our next lecture, we will go on to consider baptism and the Lord's supper as ordinances of the Christian church.

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Doctrines of the Church and Last Things. This is session 9, Marks of the Church, Ecclesiastical Separation, and Biblical Principles Concerning Error.