

Finding the Right Hill to Die On

A look at Gavin Ortlund's book on theological triage

Chapter 5-Navigating the Complexity of Secondary Doctrines

What is a secondary doctrine? *“Second-rank doctrines are not essential to the gospel, but they are often important enough to justify divisions at the level of denomination, church, or ministry. They are issues outside the Apostles’ Creed but more important than, say your interpretation of an obscure passage in Daniel.”*

As we think about these secondary doctrines, we should remind ourselves that it is not always _____ to discern the importance of a doctrine and there are always several factors to consider.

“There is a spectrum of doctrinal importance. Some doctrines, we might conclude, are on the border between one category and another. For instance, some secondary doctrines might be almost essential; others might be almost tertiary. Thus, if we assume that all secondary doctrines are equally secondary, we may be in danger of glossing over important differences.”

Some people might rank some secondary doctrines _____ than others. For example, the issues of the doctrines of grace and baptism are both in this category, but someone may be willing to join a church where there is a different view on baptism because they value the doctrines of grace more highly.

Ortlund gives three things to think about when attempting to categorize whether an issue is second-rank doctrine:

1. **One must consider the relation of the doctrine to the _____**-While all doctrine is ultimately connected, some doctrines are more immediately connected with the gospel than others.
2. _____ **context can elevate a doctrine**-With the shifting culture things that use to not be considered very important because of their rareness are now today considered very important because of cultural acceptance.
3. **One has to try and remove excessive _____**-Sometimes an issue may seem very important to us because it is an issue that we feel strongly about and not because it is really important.

The chapter then concludes looking at three second-rank doctrines: baptism, spiritual gifts, and complementarianism/egalitarianism

Baptism- *“There were probably more Anabaptist martyrs in the sixteenth century than Christian martyrs in the first three centuries of the church, prior to the conversion of Constantine. Let that sink in: more Christians were killed by each other over baptism during the Reformation than were killed by the Roman Empire over their faith in Christ.”*

There are three reasons Ortlund gives for why baptism is such an important issue:

1. **It is a matter of _____ to Christ-** Baptism for the church was instituted by Christ to be a picture of His work.

“People today often think of baptism as fundamentally a matter of ‘expressing my faith,’ and elevate the experiential aspect of being baptized.”

- 2. It is an important part of the church’s _____** - Baptism is a gift given to the church for the mutual edification of the saints.

“Our doctrine of baptism is profoundly related to our doctrine of the church. Too often in our individualistic society we think of baptism as a private experience and overlook the corporate function it is designed to play among the people of God.”

“Rather than seeing baptism simply as an individual’s public statement of faith (which it surely is), baptism should also be seen as one way the church bears witness to the gospel. This means that baptism is intended to be a blessing not just to the person being baptized but also to the entire church family that observes the baptism.”

- 3. As a sacrament, baptism is a _____ and _____ of the gospel-** Baptism is a picture of the promises that are ours in Christ and of our being recipients of those promises-the washing of regeneration and the new life given as a gift.

“The water portrays the washing away of sins (Acts 22:16), and the immersion into water symbolizes union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4).”

While baptism is very important, we must remember that it is not a first-rank issue and does not form the boundary line of _____. We must hold our view with biblical conviction but not think less of our brothers and sisters who have a different understanding of baptism.

Spiritual Gifts: Continuationism versus Cessationism- This issue involves the more _____ spiritual gifts. While this issue can be a third-tier issue it can rise to a second if a church is incorporating the use of gifts into the public worship services.

While the reformed position on this issue is usually associated with the _____ position there have been those in the reformed camp that have held to more of a continuationist position. Ortlund gives three categories here: strict cessationism (Warfield & Edwards), soft cessationism (Calvin & Owen), and continuationists (Luther & Knox).

There are many issues at play in this issue such as _____ did these gifts cease. Also, there must be definitions given for _____ the spiritual gifts actually refer to.

Complementarianism versus Egalitarianism-Are there distinct roles for men and women in the _____ and in the _____ or is there an equality for men and women in these areas of church and home?

How a church answers this question can have a significant impact on the life and _____ of the church. This issue will impact how the church counsels, how the church interacts with culture, and how a church understands important issues of hermeneutics.

In conclusion, in all of these second rank issues there needs to be much wisdom, humility, and _____. We must remember that while these issues are important issues for the life and worship of the church, they do not involve the issues of heresy and orthodoxy.