

Marking and Avoiding Subversives with Guest: David Mitzenmacher

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HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Marking and Avoiding Subversives. That is a topic we'll discuss today right here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host. The Christian Worldview is a non-profit listener-supported radio ministry. Our website is TheChristianWorldview.org and the rest of our contact information will be given throughout today's program. As always, thank you for your notes of encouragement, financial support and lifting us up in prayer.

There have always been subversive people within the church and there always will be. And the aspect of great neglect for far too many Pastors today is not warning their churches about them, whether the pastor doesn't have the discernment to see error or whether he's unwilling to "be negative," the result is the same: Christians led astray by smooth and flattering speech, Romans 16:18.

In the week leading up to Easter, Christianity Today, led by editor-in-chief Russell Moore, published an article with the headline "Was Jesus Crucified with Nails?" The Bible is abundantly clear that He was. Just check John chapter 20:25. So why let this article see the light of day? David Mitzenmacher, associate pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida and Chairman of Founders Ministries joins us today to discuss compromising influencers within the professing church, specifically with the example of Russell Moore.

We have a very full program with David, so let's get straight to the interview. David, thank you for coming on The Christian Worldview Radio Program today. Let's start out with you telling us about your background, how God brought you to saving faith, and what you do now.

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

The Lord saved me in high school. I was raised in a non-religious home, my father was a non-practicing Jew, my mother a non-practicing Roman Catholic. So a background that while lots of love, not any gospel there.

As a high school student, I was just an angry young man loving my sin and I was leaving campus one day and a member of the Gideon's ministry was handing out the little pocket New Testaments and I took one with really no intention of doing anything with it. I think I probably did it to be smart more than anything.

But then, several months later, in what I can only call God working in my heart, I had this urge to open it up and read and I made it through the gospels, I made it to the book of Romans, and then I realized I had a real serious problem.

So I called a Christian friend of mine who connected me with his pastor and the Lord used that Gideon's Bible to crush me with the law and He used that pastor to relieve me with the gospel.

So I've been walking with the Lord ever since. Married with three kids, married my high school sweetheart, spent about 20 years in corporate America leading executive turnarounds. I was really specializing in organizational leadership while also serving as a lay elder in my local church.

Then the Lord in His wisdom and His kindness called me to full-time pastoral ministry where I now serve as the associate pastor at Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral Florida. I also have the privilege of serving as the chairman of the Board for Founders Ministries, which is a ministry focused on the recovery of the gospel and the reformation of local churches.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

What a miraculous conversion David. Thank you for sharing that. David Mitzenmacher is our guest today here on The Christian Worldview. David, we're going to talk about an article that you recently wrote titled *The Rise and Fall of Russell Moore*. He's the editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, was formally very involved in the upper levels of the Southern Baptist Convention. Many listeners might recognize his name. You had a very compelling article where you said, "It's time to say no Moore," a play off his last name.

Now, you start out early in that article by writing these two paragraphs. You said: "There was a time when many conservative evangelical leaders respected Russell Moore as a gifted theologian and champion of biblical values, but that time has long passed. In recent years, a growing number of those same leaders who once platformed Moore have begun privately voicing grave concerns about Russell Moore's trajectory. The dissonance between private criticism and public silence is untenable. And worse, it is harmful to the church. Too many of those who travel in more respectable circles, they're willing to express their concerns in private but are hesitant to bring these concerns out into the open."

That's from your column. Now, I think this is an important place to start because there's going to be a polemic nature of today's program, pointing out something that's going wrong.

I think about the passage in Romans chapter 16 starting in verse 17, where Paul writes: "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Jesus Christ, but of their own appetites. And by their smooth and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting."

First question for you, David, is: What does it mean to be a subversive to the faith? And then, contrast how Christ and the Apostles handled subversives to how you see modern Christians dealing with it today.

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

To put it as simply as I can, to be subversive to the faith means to work whether actively or passively to erode the authority of God's word, to distort the Gospel or to undermine the church's moral witness.

And one of the things that makes subversion so dangerous is that subversives often speak in winsome tones. They often even appeal to Christian compassion. They have a veneer that seems like they're on the same team, but underneath that veneer is a rejection of biblical clarity just dressed up really nice.

It's fairly easy to dismiss the person who comes in guns a blazing with error in a way that's offensive, but when it tickles the ears, we can miss that someone is replacing theological fidelity with cultural sensibilities.

I also think it's important to distinguish between those whom we simply have a charitable disagreement with those who are subversive. A brother who sees issues differently is not necessarily subversive, but someone who consistently and intentionally muddies biblical categories, redefines sin, winks at lawlessness, these people are not merely mistaken, they're dangerous.

You asked how did Christ and the Apostles deal with subversive men versus how does it tend to be handled today? Well, Christ and the Apostles dealt firmly with subversives. Those who introduced heresy or moral compromise, there was no mincing of words.

You read from Romans 16 earlier. That absolutely is consistent with how the Apostles dealt with such men. Also 1 Timothy 1:20, Hymenaeus and Alexander, Paul says, "Whom I handed over to Satan." There was no concern for, "Well, let's be nice here."

The other Apostles, our Lord Himself saw the need to protect the flock even at the risk of being viewed maybe as less than winsome. By contrast, modern evangelicalism often tolerates or even rewards subversives. The very figures who distort doctrine are upheld as bridge builders or as compelling scholars or, "Well, I'm just asking questions." And this inversion is catastrophic.

I think there's a few dynamics that have really made this situation worse in today's church, the first being the Southern Baptist Convention, and we joke about something called the 11th Commandment: "Thou shall not criticize another Baptist leader." The reality is, that prevents honest assessment and accountability. Certainly Paul, when he felt it necessary to criticize Peter, rightfully so, he did and Peter received that critique.

But such a thing would never happen in the modern Southern Baptist Convention or really in evangelical circles because there's an unspoken rule that often shields public figures from reproof. I think that's complicated by webs of institutional relationships that make it just hard to speak out. Think of in this example: someone like myself who criticizes Russell Moore has most likely burnt a bridge with Christianity Today, which in turn would make certain book publishers unwilling to publish a book that I wrote because, well, certainly we know how that book is going to be reviewed in Christianity Today and so on and so forth.

So these webs of institutional relationships that can really muddy the waters. There's also the cost of institutional face-saving for a leader to critique someone that they once platformed can feel like an admission of wrong.

Then finally, and this one's maybe a little harder to pin down, but there really in modern evangelicalism is an obsession with proving that we are neither right nor left. And that often neuters evangelical courage. We often hear, "Jesus was neither a Republican nor a Democrat." And that sounds really profound, but I think that's used to run cover for leaders who are trying to portray themselves as above the fray, but actually it's air cover for pushing in a pretty strong leftward direction.

They retreat to, "Well, Christ's kingdom is not of this world." Well, you're misapplying that to run cover for a pretty obvious leftward move.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Well, the best example of that that I can think of recently, David, is what Ray Ortlund, the Christian pastor, said before the election: "Never Trump. This time Harris, always Jesus." He ends on the note of, "Yeah, I'm for Jesus, but this time we can really go either way as a Christian and be a faithful Christian and vote for the party that is far greater purveyor of wickedness than the other one." And they're both wicked, I get that.

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

Yeah, they're both wicked. But I put something out there during the election, it sounds very profound to say Christ was neither a Republican nor a Democrat, but Christ was also neither a firefighter nor an arsonist, yet we rightly recognize moral distinctions between those categories.

I think most people who are making that argument, and we see this, I think, in some of Russell Moore's advocacy and interestingly enough he's on staff at a church with two of the Ortlunds, but oftentimes the people who are the loudest saying "neither left nor right" curiously push pretty hard to the left.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

That's a biblical call. That's not an opinion, that's a biblical command to mark and avoid those who subvert the faith.

And we're giving the example of Christianity Today's Russell Moore in light of a column that David recently wrote that we have linked at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org, called *The Rise and Fall of Russell Moore: It's Time to Say, "No Moore."* 2 Timothy 2, David, says, and I think you may have already referenced this, but, "Avoid worldly and empty chatter."

This is what Paul told Pastor Timothy: "Avoid worldly and empty chatter. It will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some."

So the thread in this passage is not only mentioning them by name, but how there's a spiritual problem if you don't. There is further ungodliness spreads, their talk spreads like gangrene, they upset the faith of some. So it's not just about they're different, point them out and get them out of there. It's for the effect it has on the body of Christ. So would it be accurate to say, David, that pastors who don't point out subversives or subversion within the faith by name are actually... It's a kind of dereliction of duty as a pastor to do so?

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

I think it can be. Now, I certainly don't want to bind consciences in a way that is untoward and so a pastor who's tending to his flock may not be aware of every going on in the world of broader evangelicalism.

So I have a category for that. But in a lot of cases, I mentioned this in the article, in quiet conversations, in hallways at conferences, everybody knows what's going on with Russell Moore. This is not something that mainstream evangelicalism is not aware of. He's a very high profile figure. This has been going on for an extremely long time.

So I do think if a pastor knows that there's someone who's being subversive and that person has a significant platform, like being editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, and if that person has shown a continued pattern of trying to influence Christians to adopt their particular twisting of doctrine and scripture, then I do think we ought to warn the flock about such men and we ought to do it by name, not just in generalities.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Before we get into some of the things you wrote about in your column with regard to Russell Moore, from the evidence you gave that this needs to be marked and avoided, what was Russell Moore's background before he rose to prominence within the Southern Baptist Convention? And how did he actually get to attain the high level of SBC leadership that he did?

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

Prior to Russell Moore taking the position of the leader of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, it almost seemed like he was made in a lab for that job. He was someone who had both political and theological experience. Before entering ministry, he was briefly an aide to US representative Gene Taylor who at the time was a Democrat. Taylor later became a Republican, but that was after Moore assisted on his campaigns.

But that gave Russell Moore early exposure to the political world, and that exposure seemed to shape his interests in cultural and ethical engagement. He later pursued theological training. He earned a PhD from Southern Seminary. And there at Southern Seminary he served as a professor and he rose to the rank of Dean of the School of Theology and he showed remarkable academic ability and he also showed a real gift for communication and that earned him a lot of respect in evangelical circles.

In 2013 he was appointed the president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. And at the time, if we're being honest, he was broadly perceived as a conservative

evangelical who was both theologically conservative as well as culturally and politically conservative. He was viewed as articulate. He was framed as someone who could uphold Baptist convictions in the public square. Again, if we're just being honest, his appointment was largely viewed as a good thing.

But pretty quickly, cracks began to be apparent. He started downplaying really central issues that are very important to Southern Baptists around abortion and marriage and other things. And he started really fixating on things that were much more acceptable to the progressive gaze and gaze, G-A-Z-E. Elevating race, elevating immigration as really the defining tests of the Christian witness and really started punching right and coddling left every opportunity that he could. More and more his trajectory seemed to diverge sharply from the people that he was supposed to be representing.

Again, this is not a "Joe Christian" sitting in the pew who has different opinions. This is someone whose job it was to speak on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention who was taking positions and views as if they were ours that did not reflect the people who were paying his salary.

The Southern Baptist Convention is a cooperative entity of independent autonomous churches, so it operates differently than a lot of, say, denominations. And so it's not a top-down organization. In fact, the local church is headquarters. So when you have one of the entities going against what headquarters is telling it to do, I think that's when people started really expressing a lot of concern, saying, "What are you doing? You're not doing the job that we sent you to do." There's some excellent history behind what happened to the ERLC under the leadership of Russell Moore at ChristOverall.com/ERLC that really shows this entity that just went off the reservation.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

David, you had mentioned that Russell Moore formally appeared to be quite sound in a lot of important biblical issues. You say as he rose to prominence, Moore appeared to champion core Baptist convictions in the public square. You just said this. He spoke unequivocally about biblical manhood and womanhood in the wake of the Supreme Court forcing gay "marriage" upon a country that had rejected it in countless democratic elections, Moore asserted that evangelicals have "no option to capitulate" on the biblical definition of marriage.

Such statements led conservatives to believe that Moore would not waver on orthodoxy or moral truth. In your view, David, has Russell Moore actually publicly changed on these issues? And if so, what moved him? Or do subversives claim one thing in the beginning just as a ruse to gain trust? What are your thoughts on just what changed him?

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

That's a very good question and I think one of the important things to acknowledge as we think through that is that Moore's political instincts were always more moderate or even liberal than many assumed. There's a distinction between theological conservatism and political conservatism. While he was theologically conservative in his earlier years, he never really seemed to be at home in political conservatism.

He often championed progressive policy positions whether, again, on immigration or social justice or environmentalism, and he did that while seeming to hold some theological conservative positions. But over time, it just seemed like whenever those two things met, whenever there was a conflict between his seemingly conservative theology and his seemingly liberal or progressive politics, rather than recasting his politics in light of his theology, it seemed like the opposite would happen again and again.

In his role leading the ERLC and certainly afterwards in his role at Christianity Today, increasingly platformed voices skeptical of biblical authority on gender and sexuality really gave some credibility to those who had a message of ambiguity. I think sometimes it's hard to say exactly why someone went off the course that they did, but I think some theories that make sense, first, there's elite proximity. He had a role that there's photos of Russell Moore in the Obama White House. He got to rub shoulders with the political and academic elites and sometimes that can create a desire for respectability over orthodoxy.

I think that was compounded by media affirmation. The secular media loves someone who is evangelical coded, saying on record things that go against core evangelical beliefs. If you ever want to make a living for yourself, there is a lot of money in being the token Southern Baptist who says, "Actually, Southern Baptists are wrong about everything and here's why the progressives are right." And so as he became more and more of a darling of mainstream media outlets, there was more of an incentive to criticize the church while currying favor with secular institutions.

I think the last piece, and there's just no getting around this, is he had a very, very, very negative reaction to the candidacy of former and current president Donald Trump. It really became an all-consuming thing for him to the point that even those who were no fans at all of Trump, even some who take the label of Never Trumpers said something seems to have broken and Russell Moore that has caused him to just become so fixated on this issue above all other things that he's willing to burn down the Southern Baptist Convention over what he views as this huge betrayal of his views.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

I think one of the most troubling aspects of what took place with Russell Moore within the Southern Baptist Convention, and it happened when he left the Southern Baptist Convention, in time, there was a lot of pushback against him and his leadership at the ERLC. Eventually he decided to leave the Southern Baptist Convention. That's when he moved over to Christianity Today where he is the lead person of the editor-in-chief of that publication.

But before he left the Southern Baptist Convention, there were accusations from him. Actually, I'll just read from your article here: "As a parting shot in leaving the SBC, Moore wrote a bombshell letter that was very conveniently leaked to the press that accused his critics from the SBC of being party to a widespread sexual abuse crisis. Moore alleged that top Southern Baptist leaders were complicit in a conspiracy to cover up widespread sexual abuse, calling it 'the Southern Baptist apocalypse,' and accusing SBC leadership of a criminal conspiracy."

Very serious allegations being made here in this letter by Russell Moore before he left the Southern Baptist Convention. You go on to say: "The allegations were so severe that all awaited the outcome of a federal investigation launched by the US Department of Justice under the Joe Biden administration."

Skipping down a little bit: "What was the result of this Department of Justice investigation? In March 2025," you write, "the department informed Southern Baptist Convention attorneys that the inquiry had 'officially concluded and resolved without any charges' against the SBC executive committee or any other Baptist entity. After an exhaustive probe that primarily took place under an administration, the Biden administration that was openly hostile to conservative evangelicals, not a single person was indicted for an abuse conspiracy in the Southern Baptist Convention. In plain terms, the federal government did not find the institutional systemic criminal cover-up that Russell Moore repeatedly insinuated was at hand."

"And finally, over \$2,000,000 in legal fees were spent by the Southern Baptist Convention responding to inquiries from the Department of Justice and other agencies." This is truly, David, an astounding accusation that he made, and an astounding verdict: that there's nothing there there. So, has Russell Moore made any response to this ruling? And is he actually at risk for civil prosecution for slander of the entity of the Southern Baptist Convention nor individuals within it?

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

Yes, as far as I know to date, Russell Moore has not retracted his inflammatory claim that the SBC was engaged in a criminal conspiracy. And just to really make clear what it is we're talking about here, in Russell Moore's leaked resignation letter, he wrote that: "The most powerful people in Southern Baptist life for years have stood against efforts to address the rape and sexual abuse of children and others."

And he further alleged: "It is not just about abuse, it is also about spiritual and psychological abuse of people being torn to shreds."

And he goes on to say: "Many Southern Baptist executive leaders have known about these matters for years and have done absolutely nothing and have stood in the way of attempts to change that." These were not vague or general remarks. He explicitly accused SBC leadership and institutions of widespread criminal activity.

The fact that the Department of Justice found nothing raises serious questions about Moore's credibility. And again, just to be very clear about what Moore's charge was because it seems like now there's some goalposts shifting, the core charge was the existence of a systemic coordinated criminal cover up, and that was not substantiated.

Moore's defenders have since tried to shift the goalposts. Now that the Department of Justice has returned nothing, now there's a pivot to highlighting isolated cases of abuse in local autonomous churches, and these

cases are tragic, but these are cases that occur at a far lower rate than in public schools, more secular institutions.

There's this pretending that this is what Moore was talking about all along, but that's not what he alleged. He claimed that there was a widespread criminal conspiracy at the highest levels of the Southern Baptist Convention, not that, out of 40,000 Southern Baptist churches, you can find a handful of tragic but isolated cases of abuse that were rightly handled by the civil magistrate. I just think it's very clear that we keep in mind what it was that more alleged and don't allow us to be gaslit to say, "No, this was just about abuse is bad." No, this was an allegation of criminal conspiracy at the highest level of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I have read, for example, in the Center for Baptist Leadership, an article that is written, I believe by a lawyer that if proven defamatory, these remarks could open the door to civil litigation, especially given the damages that the Southern Baptist Convention has clearly and demonstrably suffered because of these claims.

But I'd say even more so than is there a legal charge here, I think this is a very clear case of bearing false witness against one's neighbor. And Christians must hold leaders accountable for such things, especially when they damage the witness of the church and, even more importantly, the reputation of our Lord. We ought not to let such things just slip by as, "Oh, oops." No, this is a very serious thing that happened.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

It certainly is, and I remember talking with your pastor, Tom Ascol, a couple of different times on this program over the years about these accusations and just to hear this has been the result of the investigation is really just astounding.

Just one more thing, David, that he became involved in after he left the Southern Baptist Convention. And you write: "One example of Moore's continued attempts to subversively influence the church can be seen in his involvement in The After Party Project, a partnership with David French who's a columnist for the New York Times, professing evangelical and Curtis Chang, that was framed as an effort to move evangelicals past political partisanship. Instead of helping Christians think more clearly about political theology from a biblical standpoint, The After Party Project treats evangelical convictions as relics of a regrettable past."

Skipping down: "Funded," this After Party Project, "Funded by secular left-wing foundations that have stated their intentions of creating inroads into evangelicalism to sway Christians on issues like abortion, homosexuality, transgenderism, and illegal immigration." And then you close by saying: "There were endless segments in this project, this curriculum, so to speak, are devoted to critiquing the dangers of Trumpism."

You mentioned earlier just about the effect of Donald Trump, his rise, on Russell Moore. Does that have anything to do, in your mind, with Russell Moore's drift in his undermining efforts? And if so, why?

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

To be clear on this, Moore's reaction to Donald Trump has been so extreme that even those who have come out publicly as Never Trumpers have disavowed Russell Moore's reaction to Donald Trump. So this is not simply, "Oh, to be a good Southern Baptist, you have to vote this way or that way. To be an evangelical, you have to vote this way or that way."

Although certainly I think we ought to apply the Bible to the public square, and I think in this last election it was pretty clear, we saw that Moore's opposition to Trump, it was so aggressive that it really became the defining mark of his ERLC tenure.

I mean, Donald Trump tweeted that Russell Moore is a poor representative of Southern Baptists and that he's a nasty guy with no heart. And I think some of that was not just because Russell Moore was critical of Donald Trump, it's that he did it in a way that didn't just oppose Trump's policies or Trump's character, but that castigated any Christian who would vote for him and painted them as morally compromised and unfaithful to Scripture.

And he did in a way that alienated millions of faithful southern Baptists. Again, even those who agreed with Russell Moore perhaps politically just viewed the way that he engaged in this issue as over the top and slanderous, he scolded Southern Baptists in a way that was really inappropriate. And it wasn't just about, "You disagree with me." It seemed like he took it personally and he did it in a way that broke trust with the churches he was called to represent.

As time has gone on, Moore's actions have shown really where his allegiance lies. You mentioned his participation in The After Party initiative, and this was really framed or claimed to be a third way between left and right: "Hey, let's as Christians move beyond partisanship." But getting into the curriculum itself, it's very clear that what it was trying to accomplish was to erode conservative convictions in a way that presented biblically faithful Christians and people who openly advocate for transgenderism as side by side, morally equivalent viewpoints.

As you mentioned, there were receipts that came out. Megan Basham did phenomenal work that showed that The After Party curriculum was funded by explicitly liberal organizations, who have gone on record saying that part of their strategy is to gain influence with evangelicals. And so you back up and you say, "Well, wait a minute." We've got liberal organizations, who were saying we're trying to buy influence with evangelicals. You have somebody like Russell Moore, who made opposition to Donald Trump his defining thing. And then you've got this curriculum that claims to be neutral, but is anything but, and it's pretty obvious what's happening there.

This isn't an isolated incident. We see the same pattern more as editor of Christianity Today. The magazine ran multiple editorials, discouraging Christians from voting or participating in politics.

Fascinating. There was an editorial that said the case for Christians not voting in the election and all the while as recently uncovered again by Megan Basham in a Daily Wire article, Christianity Today's staff since 2015 through 2022, made extensive campaign contributions and 100% of those contributions went to Democrats.

In addition, a current Christianity Today board member is listed on the leadership team of Evangelicals for Biden, which then became Evangelicals for Harris. So again, on one side you've got Russell Moore's magazine saying, "Here's why Christians ought to just not vote." And on the other side, you've got all the Christianity Today staff who's giving money to politicians, giving 100% to Democrats and a Christianity Today board member on the leadership team for Evangelicals for Harris.

Okay, it's pretty obvious what play is being run here. It's disingenuous to say, "This is about our kingdom's not of this world," or "Christ was neither a Republican or a Democrat." No, this was about a group of progressive operatives trying to convince reliably conservative evangelicals to stay home on election day. This is not neutrality, it's a strategic fog that benefits only one side, and that, again, has been consistent with Russell Moore's pattern. He operates in a way that's duplicitous to get what he wants.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Again, David Mitzenmacher is our guest here on The Christian Worldview, the Chairman of Founders Ministries, and also the author or columnist of an article we're discussing today, The Rise and Fall of Russell Moore: It's Time to Say, "No Moore."

David, you wrote in your column: "On April 14th, a week leading up to Resurrection Sunday, Christianity Today ran a piece titled 'Was Jesus Crucified With Nails?' The article's thesis drawn from One scholar's speculation was that perhaps Jesus was not nailed to the cross at Calvary, but instead tied with ropes. The author speculated that nails might have been a later embellishment or a legend added to Scripture.

Incredibly, this article downplayed or ignored clear biblical evidence to the contrary, most notably, the disciple Thomas's insistence on seeing the marks of the nails in Christ's hands. You can look it up in John 20 verse 25. Christianity Today promoted the article on X or Twitter on Good Friday, seemingly casting doubt on a core detail of the cross and the reliability of Scripture just as Christians prepared to celebrate the Resurrection." I remember seeing this, David, and just thinking, "What on Earth? How did that article even make it into Christianity Today, over which Russell Moore has the final say of what goes out from that publication?"

So what do you see as the motivation, David, for publishing something like that when the evidence is right there in Scripture that nails were used? "Here, let me show you the nail prints in my hands." What's behind this?

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

The foundation for the article was the work of a single scholar, probably no coincidence, a scholar this whose X or Twitter account uses gender pronouns, criticizes Trump, praises Harris, and calls the violence of the Black Lives Matter riots "the voice of the voiceless" and "modicum of control and power for the powerless."

And this particular scholar boasts of taking a critical view to biblical scholarship. And for your listeners who are not familiar, the critical approach to biblical scholarship comes to the text really with a hermeneutic of skepticism, of suspicion. It starts from a point of disbelief really.

Rather than coming to the Word saying, "I'm going to assume the Word is true, and if my reason or my logic or the best of human ability and scholarship contradicts with Scripture, well, let God be true and all men be a liar," well, the critical approach says, "Well, if that happens, maybe something's wrong with Scripture."

And that's really the foundational framework you have to adopt to take so many progressive positions to embrace the progressive positions on gender, on manhood, on womanhood, on sexuality, on so many issues. You have to come to Scripture with an attitude of, "Perhaps it's wrong, perhaps there's an error here, perhaps we're more clever than the Word."

And so this particular article is just an example and I think a pretty absurd and ridiculous example of what happens when you take that approach to Scripture. You come to the Word and you say, "Well, maybe he was tied with rope. I know Scripture seems to say that he was nailed pretty clearly, again, John 20:25 exceptionally clearly. But maybe Scripture's wrong, maybe that was a legend, maybe that was an embellishment added to the text after the fact."

And so this article was not just a one-off mistake, it actually represents a captured worldview, a captured approach to interpreting Scripture that really seems to be the house style at Christianity Today now, which is, "Let's come to Scripture, prioritizing modern sensibilities and modern scholarship over the faith once delivered."

And so what was really interesting and encouraging, if you believe it, the bright spot is that this article invoked widespread backlash across the entire evangelical spectrum. People who can't agree on anything, people who one of them says, "The sky is blue," the other says, "The sky is red," all came together seemingly with one voice to express shock that Christianity Today under Russell Moore's editorial watch would publish such a piece.

And a thing that's been very disappointing but also pretty illustrative is that while the author of the piece offered a retraction or an apology, unless something happened in the last day or so, I've not seen anything from Russell Moore on this and that's fascinating to me. I mentioned in the introduction, my background before ministry was 20 years in executive leadership.

The idea of the leader of the organization not coming forward and taking ownership of this is unheard of. I mean, that just doesn't happen. The best most charitable explanation for this as it relates to Russell Moore is he had no idea what was going on. This article was published without his knowledge. If that was the case, I would expect a very public apology, a very public distancing from this position.

A less charitable view is that Russell Moore knew exactly that this article was being published. It certainly was publicized in a very high profile way and that he's let the author take of the flack for what ultimately is something where the buck stops with him.

And that's why I think it's so important to understand this isn't just about one article that went in a wacky direction. It's about exposing a worldview and an approach to engaging with Scripture that underlies Christianity Today and Russell Moore's approach and how they've synthesized progressive views with a supposed Christian worldview. Well, the way they've done that is by coming to Scripture with a suspicious approach that says, "Did God really say?"

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Russell Moore being in the positions he's held, he has many friends and allies that I think are in the same ballpark that he is. I think of the director of the National Institutes of Health, Francis Collins. I remember an interview he did with him during the whole COVID and they were shaming Christians for not getting the vaccines because they didn't "love their neighbor." I think of someone like Ed Stetzer at Talbot who's held other very prominent positions within evangelicalism at Wheaton College and so forth. David French, I mentioned him, the columnist in New York Times, JD Greer, who was former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. So we've talked about Russell Moore today. He's not the only one who is having an undermining influence on the church by chipping away at fundamental foundational doctrinal theological positions the church should hold strongly to. What is your exhortation for Christians listening today as to how they need to think and look for subversion and then deal with it even if it's potentially within their own church where someone's being subversive?

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

I think the starting point that I always give is Christians ought to find a healthy church and build their life around it. And that sounds really extreme in a culture that even a Christian culture that often views the church as this add-on thing as opposed to something central in our lives.

But when you find a healthy church where the gospel is preached, where the Word is viewed as authoritative, where everyone, the elders, the deacons, the members are willing to say, "We are going to follow the Word where it goes regardless of the cost." And when you build your life around that church, you don't just make it something on the exterior, something that's often the periphery, but you actually center your life on that local church, which is what we believe that the New Testament calls Christians to do, it creates systems of protection for you.

It creates brothers and sisters around you who can help inoculate you from sloppy thinking. It puts you under the authority of a local church. It puts you under the protection of elders whose job it is who are held accountable before the Lord for protecting you.

I think so many Christians, especially Christians who get more teaching from outside the church, whether that's Christianity Today or other things, and again, I say this as somebody who's the chairman of Founders Ministries, a parachurch ministry, and I say this as somebody who's joining your excellent radio program, which is a parachurch ministry. And these are excellent things, but they're not the local church. They're things that augment, there's things that strengthen. But to be a sheep who's not tied to a local church puts you in a very vulnerable situation.

Then as a member of a local church, the exhortation is open your Bible, sharpen your discernment. Love the truth, reject cowardice, weigh every single opinion that you hear against the only reliable, trustworthy standard there is, and that is God's revealed word.

Lastly, say as an exhortation to pastors and take the responsibility to guard the flock seriously. When you see threats, when you see subversive men who are trying to distort Scripture, you will be held accountable for how you have defended your flock and take that seriously.

One of the projects that Founders Ministries launched recently that I'm most excited about is Founders Seminary, and one of the things that we're aiming to do at Founders Seminary is to equip men for ministry, who have sharp minds, who have warm hearts, and who have spines of steel, and that's really what's needed in this day.

We need pastors, we need qualified men who have sharp minds, who know Scripture inside and out, such that they can sniff out heresy, they can sniff out false teaching and see it for what it is. We need pastors who have warm hearts, who love the church, who love the body, who care for them, who are not indifferent to their spiritual well-being.

And probably most in short supply, we need pastors with spines of steel who care more about fidelity to the word of God, who fear God more than they fear men, who are willing to say, "I'm going to take hard stands and I don't care if it loses nickels and noses," the success measures that so many churches are counted on. "What matters to me is caring for my congregation by fearing the Lord and serving Him well."

I think that's the prescription, the ordinary means of grace in the local church is what the Lord has given us.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

What a great exhortation to conclude our conversation, David. We need sharp minds, warm hearts, and spines of steel. Thank you for coming on the Christian Worldview Radio Program today, David. Thank you for writing this column. It is a necessary column pointing out, not uncharitably, by the way, there's a love for the truth, a calling of him to repentance, Russell Moore, and I hope listeners will go and read this column. We have it linked at our website, thechristianroyalview.org. All of God's best, David, to you and Founders Ministry and Grace Baptist Church.

GUEST: DAVID MITZENMACHER:

Thank you, David. God bless you.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

You can find links to our guest, David Mitzenmacher and the column he wrote on Russell Moore at our website, thechristianroyalview.org.

Let's close with what Paul wrote to Timothy in his second letter to him: "Evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings, the scriptures, which you're able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus."

God's word is the only basis for how we discern truth from error. Thank you for joining us today in The Christian Worldview and for your support of this non-profit radio ministry. Until next time, think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm.

The mission of The Christian Worldview is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript, or find out "What must I do to be saved?", go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call toll-free 1-888-646-2233.

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