

April, 2002

A Basket of Figs

Dedicated to the idea that the decree makes the difference. Jeremiah 24:2,3

They Just Can't Stand It!

The other day, a caller to the Dr. Laura pop-psychology radio talk show asked advice about a dilemma she faced. It seems that her mother had moved into a high crime area where drive-by shootings were common. The dilemma for the caller was that she was afraid to take her children to see their grandmother. Dr. Laura told her not to take them there, but to meet grandmother in another place to visit. But that is not the story.

After Dr. Laura had given her advice, the lady went on to say that she was not afraid for herself. "I am a Christian, and God takes care of me." That's when Dr. Laura lost her cool. "Do you mean that God does not take care of the little children who are caught in a drive-by shooting?"

The really sad thing was the ignorance of the caller, who was intimidated by Dr. Laura, and dissolved in incoherency and protestations, "That is not what I meant," she pleaded.

The trouble is, the average confessing Christian doesn't really believe that God brings all things to pass, in spite of the clear teaching of Scripture. Those who do believe it, are not capable of giving a clear witness and explanation of what they believe.

The presence of evil in the world is one of the major excuses that unbelievers hide behind and it is high time for Christians to study their Bibles and find an explanation and reason for the hope that lies within them.

The truth is that God upholds all things by His powerful hand. The biblical truth is expressed very well in the Heidelberg Catechism, Question Twenty-Eight:

Q28: What does it profit us to know that God created and by His providence upholds all things?

A28: That we may be patient in adversity,[1] thankful in prosperity,[2] and for what is future have good confidence in our faithful God and Father, that no creature shall separate us from His love,[3] since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.[4]

1. Rom. 5:3; James 1:3; Job 1:21 2. Deut. 8:10; I Thess. 5:18 3. Rom. 8:35, 38-39 Job 1:12; Acts 17:25-28; Prov. 21:1; Psa. 71:7; II Cor. 1:10

It is too bad that the caller didn't go on the offensive and ask Dr. Laura some such questions as these: "Do you think that God is unable to protect the babies that are killed in a drive-by shooting?" "Do you think that God is unwilling to protect the babies killed in a drive by shooting?" "Do you believe in God at all, especially the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Or do you believe in some namby-pamby God in the image of your own sentimentality and ignorance?" "Do you believe that God is so wise and powerful that He can make even the evil of a drive-by shooting turn to His own honor and our good, as the Scripture says." "Are you just trying to be politically correct and define God down to the level of modern vacuity?" "Do you think that difficult concepts will go away because you adopt bully-boy tactics?"

These are good questions, and there are many others just as good. The God of the Bible is all-wise, all-powerful, all-just, and all-loving. Because we can't catch something in our net, it doesn't mean it is not a fish. [See the article below: "Why the Wicked Have Power.~"]

Eating Meat; Wearing Skins!

Doctrine of Devils

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. Genesis 3:21

Deuteronomy 12:21 If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and [thou shalt eat](#) in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. -I Timothy 4:1-5

In spite of sentimentality, Walt Disney, and eastern religions, animals were created for the use and service of men. Those who would forbid their use to men are teaching the doctrines of devils, according to the apostle Paul.

There are many ways to attack the true faith, which alone saves the soul from hell. Satan is familiar with them all. It was God who clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of animals after the fall, and God who ordained that Israel should rejoice before Him with feasts of the flesh of animals.

On the lowest level the prohibitions come from thoughtless sentimentality. Human attributes are given to animals through imagination. I suppose that the book *Bambi* and the Disney movie did as much as any thing to sentimentalize deer and allow emotion to replace ideas in people.

Deer are not cuddly and gentle animals. In fact, they are wild and dangerous to the unwary. They are beautiful in the wild, and even better when they are prepared properly in meat pies. They also make a delicious sausage when mixed in the proper proportion with good ground pork and seasoning. Their antlers make good trophies and the skins make good coverings for the floors of manly dens.

Of course, those who would be wiser than God would prohibit their use for food, adornment, or clothing. Unbelief often tries to substitute imagination and emotion for the clear principles of Scripture.

Going After Her Lovers

For their mother hath played the harlot; she that conceived them hath done shamefully; for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her the grain, and the new wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. Hos. 2:5-8

Hosea had been told to marry a harlot, Gomer, with her illegitimate children. [Whether this was in real life, or in a prophetic vision, we will leave to others to decide]. His marriage was to serve as a rebuke to Israel who had left the true God to worship idols.

Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea and followed after her lovers, refusing to live as a faithful wife. Hosea [Whether in a vision or in real life] threatens her with divorce, with rejection of both her and her children. In this God is sending a strong message to Israel to repent of her idolatry and turn to her true husband, Jehovah.

Just like Gomer, Israel refused to return to her God. She took the gifts that God gave her and offered them to Baal. She gave her false gods credit for her blessings.

It is typical for idolaters to turn to their idols in the day of trouble, just as Israel did. Recently, we Americans have heard more about multiculturalism and pluralism than ever before. Has it never crossed anyone's mind that the true God may be calling us to

reject our idols and return to Him. Or will we be like Gomer, refusing to see the truth and chasing our idols.

The religions of the world do not worship the same God under different names. The only way a person can believe this is to strip the name of God of attributes so that it essentially becomes meaningless.

Dead Orthodoxy? Not!

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. --John 20:31

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: --2 Peter 1:3

Energy is not the same as life. Dead orthodoxy is not dead, for you cannot kill the Gospel, even if a fool stammer it. The dead worshippers of Baal cut themselves and prayed loudly as they tried to get their dead god to answer from heaven. They were sincere enough to cut themselves with knives, but their dead god didn't hear. [I Kings 18] Activity, emotion, noise, and sincerity do not of themselves constitute true worship. But if we beat the drums loudly enough, people will not notice how empty their lives are and how false the doctrine is.

If a person really desires to know the will of God, he will find it in God's revealed verbal revelation. God had told Israel through Moses:

If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, *and* if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off. It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. Deut. 30:10-14

What Deut. 30:10-14 is to the nation of Israel, Romans 10:4-9 is to the modern world:

For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth,

and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Just as the law was clear to Israel, so the Gospel is clear to the world. The preaching of the Gospel is the power of God to all who believe, to those who are called of God.

Dead orthodoxy? No way. This was a phrase invented by revivalists to slander and discredit those who insisted on faithfulness to the message of the Gospel. In refusing to preach the whole counsel of God revivalists tailored their message to make people feel good. Excitement and hoopla replaced the faithful preaching of the Gospel. Crowds flocked to the excitement and circuses of the revivalists.

Emotion replaced doctrine, people barked like dogs, were “slain in the Lord,” and many other foolish things completely unknown in the Scripture. Irrationalism replaced Gospel truth, and people who had these experiences thought they were “saved.” Emotional, irrational experiences replace the “word of faith,” which was preached by Paul and the other apostles. But it felt good, the crowds came, there was plenty of money, and preachers became famous. Were lives changed? A great many things can change lives: a death in the family, drunken driving, a divorce, psychic experience. “Changed to what?” is the real question. If the conversion does not result in obedience to Christ, it is not a real conversion.

Every revival, it seemed, moved the church farther and farther away from the truth. Experience replaced objective truth. “We must unite, and not divide over doctrine,” the revivalist said, even as they divided churches and split denominations.

Emotion is addictive and requires a larger and larger fix. It is also divisive and destructive. At first we reject a few doctrines in order to feel good; later we reject more; finally we worship a God without attributes and a Jesus without definition. But we beat the drum louder. We are warned of such things in the Scripture:

And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them. Isaiah 8:19,20

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him

that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:22-29

The “life” which is divorced from doctrine is false fire and a rattling of the bones. It is not to be confused with the Spirit of God, Who is given to those who believe the gospel. The words of the Spirit, the very intimate breath of God, are recorded on the pages of Scripture. If we do not abide in the doctrine of the Son, we have neither the Son nor His Spirit.

Herod was very sorry to give the order to behead John the Baptist; The rich young ruler went away from Christ and was very sad; Judas was so sorry that he had betrayed Christ that he went out and hanged himself. Repentance is not the same as being sorry; it means to turn around and go in the right direction. Sometimes people are sad because they refuse to repent. True conversion involves the will and is an assent to doctrine and obedience. It is not defined by emotion. Good and bad feelings come and go; faith overcomes both.

Why the Wicked Have Power

Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is thy sword*: Psalm 17:13:

One of the great comforts of the saint is that no evil can happen to them apart from the will of God. Wicked men and devils have power only from God, for there is no other source of power in the world. One of the great lessons from the book of Job is that even Satan could not do any evil to Job except by the permission of God.

It is true that even Satan was created by God in righteousness, but not immutable, not immune from falling. He did fall in circumstances that we know little about. In becoming the enemy of God and men, he did not cease to be a creature upheld by the power of God and used by God for His own purposes. The Bible makes it clear that it is the purposes of God that come to pass, not the devil’s (Eph. 1)

The wicked king of Assyria is described as an axe in the hands of the Lord (Isaiah 10). “Should the axe boast against the one who uses the axe,” God asks. In Daniel, after eating grass like an animal for seven years, King Nebuchadnezzar was humbled and

learned something about the Lord. "I Blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" --Daniel 4:34,35

There is no weapon that the wicked have that is not designed and formed by the power of God:

Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD. --Isaiah 54:16, 17

The wicked themselves and the weapons they forge are instruments of the Lord. It is blasphemy and atheism to say that God has nothing to do with the evil things that come into our lives. The godly attitude is to call upon God in the time of trouble, repent our sins, and covenant anew to seek Him with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

The Impossible Dream

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Gen. 3:15

This promise is the foundational promise of Scripture, the foundation in history of the Covenant of Grace. It is a promise that has no condition, a promise that Jesus would come to put away sin. Although spoken to Satan, who had beguiled the woman and brought sin into the world, the words are a promise to Adam and Eve and to all their descendants.

What is often missed is the phrase, "I will put enmity between...thy seed and her seed." The seed of the woman is Jesus, the Son of God, and those who believe in Him. The seed of the serpent are those who do the works of the devil, works of hatred and deceit, as Jesus told us in John 8:44.

The most interesting thing is the *source* of the enmity. It comes from God Himself. There can never be peace between the seed of the serpent and the seed of Christ, because the enmity comes from God Himself.

The modern world thinks it can unite opposites, and bring peace between God and the devil. Some even think that opposites are united in the mind of God, in spite of the biblical truth that God cannot deny Himself. This is the main reason for sloppiness in doc-

trine and life, for how can truth be known if both a truth and its denial can both be true? If September 11 taught us anything, it is that evil cannot be pacified by good feelings and beaming smiles. There are people who hate righteousness and hate righteous people. That hatred is even greater if the righteousness is perceived to be hypocritical. But even the hatred of hypocrites has at its roots the hatred of righteousness, because no distinction is made between hypocrisy and weakness.

For several generations, proud and arrogant religious leaders have tried to persuade Americans that there is really no difference between religions, that they are all just various paths to the same god. It wasn't and isn't true, but people could accept it, feel good and warm about themselves, as if they were open-minded and full of love and kindness. Those who believed that Christ is the only savior were called arrogant and proud and narrow. It was an old trick of the devil: accuse your opponent of what you are yourself, just as Satan accused God of using manipulative words.

If peace could come so easily, the death of Christ was a monstrous waste. After September 11, maybe America will have a second look at the subject.

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Worship: 2:00 p.m.

You Are Invited

Trinity Covenant invites you to attend our worship services. If you desire a church that uses the Apostles' Creed and the *Heidelberg Catechism*, emphasizes family worship and responsibility, then Trinity Covenant may be for you.

Pastor: C. W. Powell