

May, 2003

# A Basket of Figs

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

## This is an Infallible Leader?

“Weapons can never solve mankind’s problems.” The Pope. 3/22/3003

Hmmmm. The Civil War didn’t solve the problem of slavery? W.W. II didn’t solve the problem of German National Socialism? The great victory of Charles The Hammer in 732 A.D. at Tours didn’t solve the problem of the Muslim conquest of Christianity? The victory at Vienna didn’t thwart the Islamic plan for the conquest of Europe? The Six Day War didn’t break the back of Nassar’s United Arab Republic? Believe me, the Pope knows, so what gives?

Of course, weapons cannot solve the problem of sin and guilt, nor can they remove the curse of God upon mankind because of Adam’s sin. If the Pope was talking about THOSE problems it was one of the great *non sequiturs* of history, because his remarks were in the context of President Bush and the war against Iraq. Of course, no one—especially Bush—expected the war against Saddam to end the world’s sin and misery, but war can eliminate those who cross over the bounds of accepted anti-social behavior.

Violence certainly can solve some problems. Napoleon was a problem solved after the Russian winter and Russian troops whipped him soundly in 1812. Timothy McVey hasn’t blown up any government buildings recently and Ted Bundy hasn’t murdered any girls recently. Those problems are solved, eh? At this writing it looks like the problem of Saddam is solved, too. Of course liberals resort to wringing their hands when they can’t get up enough courage to behave in a manly way, whether in law enforcement or in international policy. My mother also solved a great many problems in my mind by a timely application of violence to my backside.

It is true that the sword should be taken only when the cost for not taking it is very high. Jesus said that a wise man would count the cost, whether it is in the building of a tower or in the matter of going to war. The costs of war are frightful, both in human lives and in resources; but often the costs of not going to war are much greater than

the going. Those who refuse to take the sword often die by the sword, too. Americans have an honorable history fighting for liberty rather than submission to slavery. Thus may it ever be. Amen. At least, that is the way I look at it.

## **Sanctification Is by Grace, Without Works.**

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. —Matthew 7:13,14

There is only one way to go to heaven. There are lots of ways to go to hell. Jesus said that the gate was “strait,” or narrow. A “strait” jacket is one that is used to confine a lunatic. In geography a “strait” is a narrow body of water between two confining landmasses, as the Strait of Gibraltar.

People don’t go to heaven just any way they choose. They go to heaven the way that God decreed, or they do not go at all. Man pretends that the fall of Adam did not leave him condemned and helpless, so he continues to forge ahead trying to find the works that will re-admit him to the Garden of Eden.

It is the same way with the truth. There is only one truth of a matter; there are many ways to lie about it. If you were in Pittsburgh on such and such a date, the story is easily and simply told. But you have the choice of a great many cities and a choice of many dates if you are going to lie about it. The idea that everything has many “truths” is a deception of the devil, who was a liar from the beginning.

Listen to the conversations around you. As people speak they are interpreting the world and the people around them. If people do not love the truth in their hearts they will lie about their world. “The lip of truth shall be established forever: but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment,” according to Proverbs 12:19.

People lie constantly about religion because the lie is in their heart—the lie that they are masters of their own fate and that what they do can gain them favor with God. Everything within the natural man rebels against the truth: that men are bound in sin, under the dominion and power of the devil and completely helpless to do anything to save themselves or to keep themselves saved. Resisting the truth, man lies constantly.

If a man aims at eternal life, he must go the way revealed by Christ and the Apostles. He does not have a bunch of choices. Jesus claimed to be both the door of salvation and the way to fellowship with God. There are no other choices. “I am the door: by me

if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” --John 10:9. “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” --John 14:6 Words to this same effect are found throughout the Scriptures. The apostle Peter said the same thing when called before the rulers of the Jews and was told not to preach in the name of Jesus: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” --Acts 4:12.

Jesus Christ is the Author and the Finisher of our Faith, according to the writer of Hebrews. [Heb. 12:2] In order to be saved we trust Him as the One who begins our faith and the One who perfects [finishes] it. That is why Paul could write to Timothy, “I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” --II Timothy 1:12. Paul had committed his salvation to Christ, in whose hands it was safe.

From beginning to the end, salvation is of the Lord and that is the confession of the true church in all ages. Salvation is supernatural, impossible for the strength and wisdom of man to dream up, impossible for him to enter in, and impossible for him to continue to its final conclusion.

This was the reason that the Apostle Paul asked the Galatians, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” He was not talking to unbelievers, but to those who had begun in the Gospel and had listened to those who claimed that Christ was not enough, that they must live like Jews to really be saved. The whole force of his argument is that moving from Christ to the law is abandoning the Spirit for the flesh.

It is impossible for a man to be justified, or sanctified, by the works of the flesh. The flesh is as incapable of keeping the commandments of God after regeneration than it was before. Regeneration does not transform the flesh, but imparts a new nature after the image of Jesus Christ. The flesh remains the flesh and continues to war with that which is born of God, as Paul tells us in Galatians 5. The great difference is that the believer, through the understanding of the Gospel of the Cross of Christ, now recognizes and confesses that as a natural man he is worthy of death and that he is member of the race of Adam and is worthy of death and eternal damnation. Why else would God have sent His son to the horrible death of the cross, if man in any way deserved to live? The Gospel requires consent to the meaning that God attaches to the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The truth is told very simply, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby I am crucified unto the world, and the world

unto me.” --Gal. 6:14. There are lots of ways to lie about it. The death of Christ doesn't mean different things to different people. Not if they are going to heaven.

One way to lie about it is to affirm that we are born again by the gospel of Jesus Christ, but are sanctified by keeping the law. To put it another way, we get into the covenant by grace, but we must remain in it by our works. This is precisely the error that Paul deals with in his letter to the Galatians. You have begun in the Spirit but are made perfect [finished] by the flesh [law]? The error was so serious that Paul accused them of departing from Christ. Paul called it precisely. It is a departure from Christ to reintroduce that which must be rejected in order to come to Christ. Why build again that which the Gospel destroys? The Gospel tells us that we are sinners unable to obey God sufficiently to earn His favor, or to keep His favor. Do we reintroduce a lie after we have learned the truth?

Baptism into Christ means that we have put on Christ, not Moses. Jesus did not come to make everyone Jews or to bring us all under the order that was given at Sinai.

This does not mean that God has changed or that His requirements for righteousness have been relaxed. No, God cannot deny Himself, and He cannot affirm anything other than His most holy requirement that men love Him with all their hearts, all their souls, and all their minds, and their neighbors as themselves.

The difference is in how that requirement is to be kept. The Gospel teaches us that through covenant we participated in Adam's sin. His guilt and damnation were imputed to all of Adam's children. So the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, fully kept all the commandments of God and His perfect righteousness is imputed to all those who believe. Faith is not a substitute for righteousness, but the means that the true righteousness of Christ is accessed [Rom. 5:1ff]. Believers are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and will never come into condemnation, for their sins are fully removed, cast behind the back of God to be remembered against them no more forever. Amen! and Hallelujah. They are blessed, and God will not impute their sins to them [Rom. 4:1ff], just as He did not impute Abraham's sins to him. Paul could not be more clear: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Such a man is not guilty.

Men must never be removed from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because we are complete in Jesus Christ [Col. 2:10] there is nothing that we can add of ourselves without spoiling it. To become a Christian is to put on Christ, as Paul tells us. There is only one way to put on Christ and that is by faith. We do not put on Christ by working hard, but by being baptized into Him by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 3:2,3: 2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

It is the Spirit of God who engrafts us into Christ and it is the Spirit of God who teaches us obedience. The Spirit comes to me by the hearing of faith, so that my life in Christ is by the Spirit of God from start to finish. Of course, the Holy Spirit does not teach me to hate God and my neighbor—that is the work of the flesh, the nature that I received from Adam. The flesh can pretend to love God and can pretend to love men, but only the Holy Spirit can work love in the heart. This work of the Holy Spirit is by the Gospel. As the writer of Hebrews says,

For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a dis-annulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Everything connected to the Aaronic priesthood passed away when that priesthood and temple passed away. Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, and every Jew should have been riveted by the account of that event, especially when David predicted that a priest was coming after the order of Melchisedec. True grace and mercy were offered to Israel under Moses, but this grace was not in their works or the ceremonies that they kept, but through faith in the Promise that was given to Adam, reaffirmed to Abraham, and pictured in the ceremonies and trappings of the Mosaic institutions.

There are always some souls around who will object to this perfect and complete Gospel of grace. “But, but, but...” they say. “People will be careless and live like the devil. They must have rules. They must have the law to perfect their faith. They must be told what to do. Don’t make it so easy.”

But dare we require people to earn what God freely gives? Romans 4:16ff

Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all...

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

The perseverance of the saints is the fruit of our sanctification, for what is it to be sanctified but to persevere in the faith? The Fathers at Dordt rejected the errors of those who taught that “the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election, or a gift of God gained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant, which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfill through his free will.”

*The Heidelberg Catechism* is also clear:

Q65: Since, then, we are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, where does this faith come from?

A65: The Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Holy Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments.

All the benefits that Christ purchased for us comes to us through the preaching of the Holy Gospel and it is confirmed by the holy sacraments. How much plainer can it be?

Q67: Are both the Word and the sacraments designed to direct our faith to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A67: Yes, truly, for the Holy Ghost teaches in the Gospel and assures us by the holy sacraments, that our whole salvation stands in the one sacrifice of Christ made for us on the cross.

Our whole salvation stands in the one sacrifice of Christ—everything, all, only ground.

Q30: Do those also believe in the only Savior Jesus, who seek their salvation and welfare from "saints," **themselves, or anywhere else?** [emphasis mine]

A30: No; although they make their boast of Him, yet in their deeds they deny the only Savior Jesus;[1] for either Jesus is not a complete Savior, or they who by true faith receive this Savior, must have in Him all that is necessary to their salvation.[2]

**“Must have in Him all that is necessary to their salvation.” Amen and Amen.**

It is a strait gate that leads to salvation. It is strait because everything in my flesh cries out against the doctrine of free grace. I just *know* that there is something that I *must* do. I must show my sincerity or prove my love. People mustn't think that going to heaven is a picnic, so I may preach against “easy believism” or an ill-defined “antinomianism,” for fear that the Gospel alone is not sufficient to keep people in line. I must keep them

in line, of course, for I am one of those who has “paid the price” to be a real and dedicated Christian. [I am pretending, of course, for no price that I can ever pay can make me worthy of the grace of God. I am purchased by the price that my Lord Jesus paid. Don’t talk to me about “paying the price” if you want me to stay out of hell.]

No, No, No, No! I haven’t paid the price; Christ has paid the price. I have not and never will keep the covenant, for if I could the death of Christ becomes an absurdity, a vanity. I am saved because He has taken me up in His everlasting arms, irresistibly persuaded me that the Bible story of man, the fall, and His redemption are true, and set me on the way to Glory. I can do no other, not because of my strength, but because of His strength. The Gospel has irresistibly burned its way into my soul, transforming me. I have not laid hold on faith; faith has laid hold on me, for saving faith is irresistible.

No works of mine can ever connect me to the Mediator. I cannot love enough, pray enough, keep enough ceremonies, or exercise my soul enough to make connection with Christ. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.” “We love Him because He first loved us.” It is He who makes connection with us; it is He who keeps the covenant for me, lays hold on me by grace, and keeps me by His power.

This will never be believed by those who are still under the power of the LIE, the lie that obedience to God is possible for us poor sinners, and if we will just try our best, God will be kind and merciful. Those who abide in darkness imagine that only an awful God would require perfect obedience. They refuse obedience to Christ and abide in their sins.

I Peter 3:18: For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit....

## **It is Still Right**

Back during that other war, these pages had an article affirming that it was biblical to fight for oil. [You will be able to find this article at <http://basketoffigs.org> The date was 9/06] It is too bad that we didn’t finish the job, but the fantasy of world government and the United Nations were albatrosses around the neck of the senior Bush, and we accommodated the appeasers in the U.N. by stopping a few days too soon. It has cost many more lives—both American and Iraqi to bring order to Iraq now.

The Scripture says that governments are given a sword as a terror to evil works.

Romans 13:3 For rulers are not a [terror to](#) good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be

afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same? For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Proverbs 20:26 “A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.”

Governments are ordained of God to restrain evil. They are used by God to maintain an order in the world so that people can be secure in the life, property, and liberty.

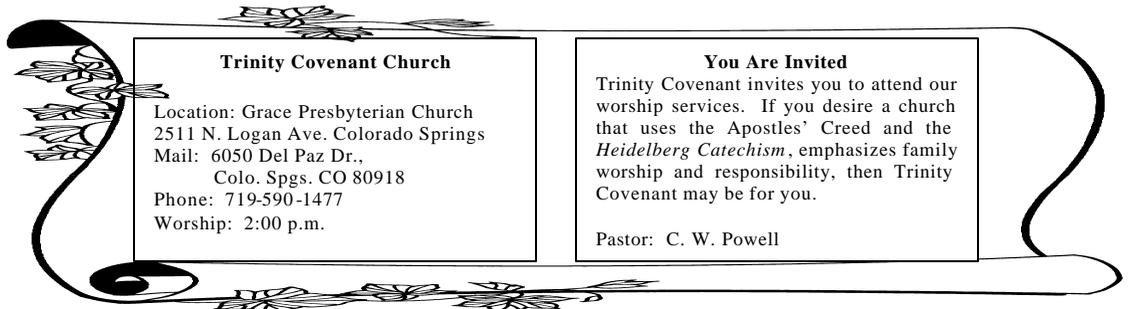
Isn't it strange, that France would ban air flight from China because of a SARS, but tuck tail and run at the prospect of eliminating the disease of terrorism, supported and funded by Iraq? Maybe not so strange when you realize the cozy weapons and oil deals between the two states.

This would make a good bumper sticker in these days: “It was wrong to avoid war because of oil.” How do you justify the kind of greed that protects and mollifies monsters, simply because they have oil to sell to you?

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<p><b>Trinity Covenant Church</b></p> <p>Location: Grace Presbyterian Church 2511 N. Logan Ave. Colorado Springs Mail: 6050 Del Paz Dr., Colo. Spgs. CO 80918 Phone: 719-590-1477 Worship: 2:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>You Are Invited</b></p> <p>Trinity Covenant invites you to attend our worship services. If you desire a church that uses the Apostles' Creed and the <i>Heidelberg Catechism</i>, emphasizes family worship and responsibility, then Trinity Covenant may be for you.</p> <p>Pastor: C. W. Powell</p>
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