

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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WHERE IS GOD AT TIMES LIKE THESE?

by Brad Harrub

The images have now been forever etched into the recesses of our minds. Our generation never will forget the pictures of that hijacked plane purposefully nose-diving into the south tower of the World Trade Center. Before we had time to catch our breath and fully comprehend what was happening, both towers imploded and careened towards the ground - leaving everything for miles around covered in a morose gray ash. As our brains began to calculate the morbidity of this tragedy, we quickly learned that there were in fact other hijacked planes and more victims subjected to flaming rubble. In the blink of an eye, countless individuals lost their lives - some choosing to do so, in an attempt to cripple the United States. But the majority were innocent men, women, and children - men, women, and children who started that fateful day with their normal routine, never expecting to take that final step into eternity on that tragic day of September 11th.

As news crews scrambled to provide us with the most shocking images and the most heart-rending stories some of us have ever seen, a quiet but detectable uncertainty began to ripple throughout communities in light of these tragic events: "Where was God, and why did He let this happen to so many innocent people?" Had we been forgotten? A semblance of these questions was echoed thousands of years ago by King David, who desperately asked: "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalms 10:1). The Israelite Gideon lamented: "Oh my lord, if Jehovah is with us, why then is all this befallen us?" (Judges 6:13). During tragedies like the attack on the World Trade Center,

questions similar to these will be heralded not only from street corners in front of news cameras, but also whispered through sobs and tears in the dark recesses of private bedroom closets.

The appeal is simple enough to understand. "If there really is a God, then why did so many people die?" This simple question often becomes a stumbling block for individuals - who subsequently make a conscientious decision not to believe in God. Many rationalize it this way: if God can prevent evil, but won't, then He is not good; or if He wants to prevent evil, but cannot, then He is not all-powerful. Unfortunately, it is often during the pain that we forget that God is in the same place - in heaven - He was when His own Son was being maliciously nailed to that old rugged cross almost two thousand years ago. Thankfully, on that grim day God remained in heaven as the sin of all humanity was placed on His Son's back and nailed to that cross.

Thanks to God's incredible love (1 John 4:8), humanity - all of humanity - has been endowed with free will (see Genesis 2:16-17, Joshua 24:15, Isaiah 7:15, John 5:39-40, 7:17, and Revelation 22:17). God loves us enough to allow us freedom of choice. Thus, all of those responsible for the savage attack upon the Pentagon and World Trade Center attack woke up that Tuesday morning with the freedom to choose what they wanted to do or where they wanted to go, for we know that God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).

So why, then, didn't God reach down and save those innocent people, as many have asked? Why

didn't He just stretch out His almighty arm and cradle those thousands of innocent lives in the palm of His hand? Again, because God loves us! We live in a world regulated by natural laws that were established at the creation of this world. For example, the law of gravity and motion behave consistently; thus if you were to step in front of a moving bus, the laws of motion would keep that bus in motion even though it would result in your death. But individuals still ask "Why?" Why could not God intervene, to prevent such disasters? Think for just a minute what sort of world would this be if God directly intervened, suspending His natural laws, each time a human encountered a life-threatening situation. This would cause indescribable chaos and confusion all over our planet. This chaotic, haphazard system would argue more for atheism than it would for theism!

Where was God when those planes full of innocent passengers slammed into the towers of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and crashed in a Pennsylvania field? He was right where he has always been - in heaven, on His holy Hill (Psalm 15:1), with Christ at His side (Mark 16:19) - a place where there is no more suffering. We must remember that while we do not understand every facet of human suffering, we can (and have the obligation to) explain enough to negate the charge that misery is incompatible with the existence of God. And we must yearn with every fiber of our being to make our permanent abode in those heavenly mansions (John 14:1-3) where "the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary are at rest" (Job 3:17) God did not forget us on September 11th, just like He did not forget Christ when He hung on that cruel cross of Calvary.

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Unity

by Burl Curtis

A person has not told you enough if he says, "I believe in and work for unity." The question must be asked, "What kind of unity?"

There have been times of great "unity" (both good and bad) throughout sacred and secular history. Without question the most perfect unity this world has ever known was before man sinned. So perfect was the unity between God, including nature (God's natural laws), and man that God "caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam" and performed the first surgery and walked "in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 2:21, 22:3:8). This perfect unity was destroyed when Eve was deceived by Satan and Adam followed his wife (Gen. 3:6; 1 Tim. 2:14). The result of disunity went from anger to jealousy and rose to the level of murder when Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4:5; 1 John 3:12). This happened when the world was young and the people few.

Perhaps there has never been a more world-wide bad "unity" than just prior to the flood. The multiplied population, except eight souls, was "united" in great wickedness "and every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:1, 5; 1 Peter 3:20). Great unholy "unity" existed at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) and in the period between the judges and the kings when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). There was great unity when Jesus was crucified. No one in the mob cried, "Don't crucify him," and weak Pilate and his wife did not stand up for him. The disciples forsook him and fled; the shepherd truly was smitten and the sheep were scattered (Matt. 26:31). There was great unity against the church when Paul was a prisoner in Rome. The Jews said, "As concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22). There was great unity in Greece and Rome when they "rolled over" the world and in France and Germany when Napoleon and Hitler conquered

nation after nation. So the question must be raised, "Unity in what and for what purpose?"

Because Satan is the prince of this sinful world (John 12:31), it is harder to find examples of large-scale good unity. There have been small "pockets" of God-approved unity among small portions of the world's population at certain times. Consider the Garden of Eden and Noah and his family building and entering the ark and emerging in a "washed clean" earth. Yet Noah and his family were so few compared to the many who drowned. The Jews giving to build the tabernacle is a wonderful example of unity (Ex. 36:5-7). Nehemiah and his helpers had a righteous unity when they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem "for the people had a mind to work" (Neh. 4:6). The early church will forever stand as a shining example of unity. Led by the trained apostles, who "were all with one accord in one place," the Jerusalem church reached a level of holy unity seldom duplicated (Acts 2:1, 44-46; 4:32-35). Depending upon your point of view, there was great beneficial unity among the colonies during the American Revolutionary War. The United States united to a level seldom seen during World War II. Great unity existed when Russia was able to cast off Communism. So to say that a church, even a nation, is united does not tell you enough. Upon what are they united?

When faithful brethren speak of unity they refer to unity in Christ based on the Bible alone. They understand what it takes to get into Christ. They do not deceive others by having fellowship with those outside of Christ and calling it unity. They are not trying to build "unity" on some man-made standard. They know that once you leave God's standard, all that remains is some man-made creed or standard. And if people will not agree to unite on God's standard, how are they going to unite on some man-made standard? The unity for which God's people work has clearly defined boundaries. They know that to draw lines where God has not drawn them or

erase lines He has drawn, or otherwise move God's boundaries, destroys God-approved unity. Where the limits have not been clearly marked by God, the faithful follower of God leaves them unmarked. They have no desire to "gather up the tares" lest they "root up also the wheat with them" (Matt. 13:29).

So please "be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1). Has it not come to pass the saying that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived"? We all need to heed Paul's words in the next verse, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Tim. 3:13,14).

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GOD'S LOGICAL CONCLUSION VERSUS MAN'S LOGICAL CONCLUSION

by Neal Pollard

We are to be obedient to Christ (Heb. 5:8-9). This passage implies the existence of law. John speaks of sin as "the transgression of the law" (1 John. 3:4). Paul's writing is filled with references to the "New Covenant" as Christ's law (Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; etc.). Christians have been freed from the "Old Law" (the Law of God; Law of Moses), but not freed from the law of the Lord (Rom. 7:4). Christ's law is a better law, "established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6-7). It truly is a "higher law" (cf. Col. 3:1-3), thus it demands more of its adherents (cf. Matt. 5:3-7:27). It is a better law because it is not confined to a chosen race of people, but is for all who respond with an active, obedient faith (Gal. 3:26-29). The Old Law was designed to bring us, according to God's master Scheme, to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25).

The law of Christ is the spiritual law under which all men are subject today (cf. Acts 17:30; Matt. 28:18-20). If not, then no one must obey the gospel, all are saved, and none could be lost except they obey the gospel and afterward turn away! Obviously, then, everyone, Christian and non-Christian, is subject, or amenable (answerable), to Christ's Law (cf. Matt. 16:16; 25:31).

This naturally relates to the subject of marriage as much as it relates to the plan of salvation. Christ instituted His law of marriage for everyone; therefore, all are amenable to that law. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus stated, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." The crux of any debate in this matter usually centers not on what constitutes scriptural grounds for divorce, but to whom this "law" applies.

Some say that Christ is issuing a law to Christians only. To support this claim, these individuals often lean on a "logical conclusion." Truly, if their "logic" is sound, then their conclusion is sound, too. It is claimed that those who were divorced for any reason before becoming a New Testament Christian can be married as many times as they choose. The mate to whom they are married when they submit to baptism is the one to whom they are bound "so long as they both shall live". Once baptized, say these, they are subject to Christ's teaching on marriage in Matthew 19:9. It is argued by those who subscribe to such "logic" that baptism washes away all past sins without one changing sinful relationships. Is this "sound" logic?

Any rationale is fair game for inspection. Let us test this thinking. Does this conclusion factor in biblical **repentance**? The dominant view of conservative scholars is that repentance means to change one's mind, to amend one's past sins, withdraw, and turn from, to turn about and to

correct committed faults. Thus is introduced the idea of restitution (making right). What must one who is unlawfully married do to make things right with the Lord? That one must dissolve that spiritually "illegal" marriage to properly repent, just as the converted thief must return whatever property he stole from its owner.

Next, what is to be done with Jesus' "whosoever"? Remembering that Christ's laws are universal, what conclusion could be drawn but that all are amenable to His law of marriage, divorce and re-marriage? To restrict Christ's "whosoever" to "whatever Christians" is to blantly change scripture to suit our desire. We would never do so with baptism or worship. Neither can we with God's guidelines on marriage.

Finally, how do we explain the principle of adultery? Is adultery a sin only Christians commit? What makes adultery become acceptable? Does baptism? Baptism is for the forgiveness of sins and not for the validation of them. God condemns adultery as a lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). Paul lists adultery as a sin characteristic of one outside a right relationship with Christ (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Does baptism make it right to continue as a thief, an idolator, a homosexual, et al? NO! So it is with adultery. One must give up the adulterous relationship.

Adultery identifies the sin (having unlawful, physical relations with another's spouse - Verses 32-33). **Whosoever** identifies the domain of who can be guilty of the sin. **Repentance** identifies how one takes care of the sin. That is God-logic. Who can improve upon it?

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A GOOD EXAMPLE

by David Macy (deceased)

You can be a powerful force for good when you are young, if you will pray and read your Bible daily, and determine to live a pure Christian life, which will be a

shining example to everyone you come in contact with. "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord our of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

The passions of young people are naturally stronger than they are later in life. A young person can really let his or her light shine by controlling these youthful passions with God's ever present help. Many very talented young people have become completely ineffective for the Master by giving in to their passions in moments of weakness. If you have a strong desire to be an effective and powerful worker for the Lord, you must buffet your body daily like the Apostle Paul and live above the seething, self-seeking, miserable world of self-gratification. "But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." (Colossians 3:8).

If you really want to shine in our present age, the first step is talking right and you will be on the road to shining, shining, shining to the Glory of God. Always make your own speech pure and holy and never even think about letting cursing, filthy jokes, or any other kind of unclean speech flow from your lips. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). A man who uses filthy talk demonstrates to everyone that he has a cesspool heart.

"But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). If we are not doers of God's word, our good clean speech will have little effect on those around us! In reality, it will be about as weak as branch water because right thinking people are never impressed with a lot of good words which are not backed up with a lot of good deeds. Our most powerfull example is what we model before others, not just our words. Our lovely Saviour both did and taught as he exploded like a meteor on the drab religious scene of His day. He never taught anything he did not practice. He was not a "Do as I say and don't do as I do preacher" like some others

we have heard about and sadly witnessed on the electronic screen.

If our practice is not right, the world will not pay much attention to our talking. The only sermon most lost folks ever hear is the one we preach by our lives. Let's make it a good one, full of power because of our bible-based God like daily living.

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Thank you - Ted J. Clarke, editor

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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