

Who Serving Who?

Michael Dunn

“Then man said, ‘let us make God in our image, after our likeness’...” 2 Opinions 1:26

Most of you are wondering where second opinions is in relation to the Bible. Well, I will let you in on a well known secret; it only exists in our hearts. We have created this book, intertwined within the same book that should really rule us, the book of God. This is the true reading of the above fabricated verse “Then God said, ‘let us make man in our image, after our likeness’...” Genesis 1:26. Obviously, the creator makes the created as he wills. Exactly as the potter forms the clay. This is exactly our relationship with our creator, God. But, being men, we pervert most everything that makes contact with us. Along with this perversion, we lose our sense of spirituality and eventually worship the creation, instead of the creator. Paul is inspired to write about such events in Romans 1:19-23 “For what can be known about God is plain to them [the unrighteous who suppress the truth], because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”

In practicality, they were only obeying a basic psychology law, that is, we as people want others to be like us, not us like them. Thus, the Greeks and Romans crafted gods and goddesses from their mind’s eye that were especially human like, taking on human attributes and personalities and sinful acts. These gods created men through immoral sexual acts or wars, but these were fables told to qualify or lessen the moral dilemma of the lascivious acts in a Romans daily life. The reasoning held by them was that if the gods did it, what prevented the average person from doing it and feeling regret for it? Some Roman citizens did have a conscience. The majority suppressed it though, just like those Paul talked about. There were those who did regret, those who “... are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.” Romans 2:14. The conscience was a law to these people, and so they knew of a higher power of some sort and could sense power in the entire world but rejected the one true God.

During Paul’s visit to Athens he observes an “inscription, 'To the unknown god.' ” he relays to the men gathered on Mars Hill, that “The God, who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man... [and so] we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.” Not only did the “religious,” gentile Romans worship human-made idols but the Israelites did as well. The chosen people of God, who were to bring forth from them the seed of Abraham, that is Jesus, they too worshipped inanimate objects formed after the Father’s creation. God expresses his anger with his people through the prophet Ezekiel, in chapters 8 and 20 of his book. During those chapters, Yahweh is upset with the treatment received from the Jews. He was disgusted with the way they spat in his face, even when he fulfilled the promise given to them. But,

it is good to know of Jews who stood up for their God. They were of course Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and Daniel. And so, let it suffice to say, that we as men fall into the temptation of categorizing the Father in with the human race. He is worshiped continuously by his creation and not by objects made of and by that creation. Our God is an everlasting God; he is unchanging, as is His Son, our Savior “Jesus Christ [who] is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:8. In essence, we as humans focus on being sociologists instead of being theologians. Let us be holy, for he is holy. Worshiping the Father instead of self is essential to a Christ-like life.

Lord, Teach Us To Pray

Drew Dow

In Luke 11:1 we find Jesus praying. As He ceases to pray one of His disciples makes a very simple, yet profound request. This unnamed disciple says, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Each and every one of us today should have the same mind set when we approach, not just prayer, but every aspect of our lives. It is for this reason that I would like to examine prayer in the light of our Lord.

What did Jesus pray for? John 17 gives us one of Jesus prayers. There were at least three times that Jesus glorified God in this prayer calling Him “The Only True God,” “Holy Father,” and “Righteous Father.” (John 17:3, 11, 25) Jesus prayed for His disciples asking God to sanctify them (John 17:9, 17). Jesus also prayed specifically for Simon Peter, that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32) The Lord prayed for the future disciples, “them also that believe on me through their word” (John 17:20). Jesus prayed for unity that we “may all be one” (John 17:21-23) Jesus set the example that we are to give thanks for our food. He stopped and gave thanks before giving food to more than four thousand people (Matthew 15:36).

Where did the Lord pray? Many of the prayers of Jesus took place in very serene, and peaceful places. A few times our Lord went up into a mountain (Matthew 14:23 Luke 6:12; 9:28). Another time He went out into the desert (Luke 5:16). In nearly every instance, Jesus “withdrew himself” or, as we find in Mark 1:35, He “departed into a desert place.” He found a calm place away from everyone else. The Lord lived what He taught when he told his disciples to “enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to they Father who is in secret” (Matthew 6:6). Even though a subdued place seemed to be our Lord’s first choice, it was not the only place that He prayed. Amidst all the great masses of people, and the loud noises that seem to be associated with His crucifixion, our savior could be found crying out to the Father (Matthew 27:46 Luke 23:34, 46).

Why did our Savior pray? When was it that our Savior found it helpful to pray? Jesus prayed in one instance when the crowds were expecting Him to tell them great things, and heal the sick (Luke 5:15). He separated Himself from the multitudes and prayed in verse 16. Matthew recorded a moment in Jesus life that was surely more stressful than any other. He was about to die a cruel death, and He knew it. How did He handle this dark and dismal situation? Matthew 26:29-44 tells us that He took three apostles of His choice, and prayed to God. He didn’t pray once, but three times he fervently prayed to His Father. He instructs us to pray in this consistent

manner. In Luke 11:5-8 Jesus gave an illustration of a man who consistently asked his neighbor for food, and finally received it.

“Lord, teach us to pray” was His disciple’s request. Jesus not only taught them to pray right there, but he continued to teach them, through example, how to pray. He showed them what kind of supplications can be made. He showed us the comforting fact that no matter where we are God is always there to talk to. Lastly, he showed us that we can pray to God in our darkest of times to find comfort. The Lord taught us to pray. Are we going to learn?

Let The “Little Dogs” Eat!

Curtis Carwile

“From there, He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.” And she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.” Then He said to her, “For this saying, go your way; the demon has gone out from your daughter.” And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out and her daughter lying on the bed” (Mark 7:24-30).

When Jesus went to the region of Phoenicia, to the north of Judea, He encounters a woman with a demon-possessed daughter. She begs Jesus to heal her daughter. Oddly enough, Jesus refuses at first saying, “Let the children be filled first.” The woman responds by saying, “Even the little dogs eat the children’s crumbs.” Then, Jesus heals her daughter because of her faith.

What is Jesus talking about when He talks about the “children” and the “little dogs?” The “children” mentioned here are the children of Israel, the Jews, while the “little dogs” are the Gentiles (this is an affectionate term for a house pet). When the woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter and Jesus said “Let the children be filled first,” He was saying two things. One, He came to convince the Jews that He was the Messiah they had been looking for and that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. He tried to prove that by the miracles and teachings he did. Two, there would come a time when the “little dogs,” the Gentiles, would have the same opportunity as the Jews to call Jesus the Savior and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. We see, in Acts 10, with the conversion of Cornelius and his household, that the time Jesus spoke of had come to pass. In Acts 15:13-19, James explains to the council in Jerusalem that “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ‘After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.’ Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God.”

Now is the time that the “little dogs,” those without a Jewish ancestry, people like most of us today, to come to Jesus. We can now call Him our Savior and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven through baptism into His blood like those on the day of Pentecost did so many years ago. Why not, oh “little dogs,” eat of the feast the Lord has prepared for you?

Turning the World Upside Down

Gary Head

As a young Christian, testing and examining God’s word for myself, sometimes I become disheartened with the seemingly massive standard set before me. We’re called to be holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16) and blameless (Eph. 1:4). We’re called to turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39) and put others before ourselves, even to death (John 15:13). However, as a people wearing the name of Christ, I’ve noticed that these things aren’t where we fail in striving. Most every good-hearted follower of Christ that I meet tries very hard to imitate Christ in these obligations; some on different levels of victory than others, but still striving to please God in these ways and often succeeding. Yet, when approaching a Christian to discuss his/her most recent efforts in studying with a non-believer, you’re very likely to be met with an avalanche of “um’s,” a bombardment of excuses, and maybe a tale or two of half-hearted attempts at inviting a friend to church. While there are exceptions, you’re likely to find this to be the case with many in the church, especially with young people.

Why is this? Why are we as a generation so lax about spreading the gospel? After all, Jesus commanded the disciples to “go into all the world making disciples of all nations” (Mark 16:15), and Paul proudly affirms God use of the gospel to strengthen us (Rom. 16:25). And yet, we young Christians so often fall short of full dedication to spreading the good news of Christ. Sure, we wear our cross necklaces with pride; we’ll occasionally invite a friend to church; we’ll stand up in our government class against the legalization of homosexual marriage, even though half of the class is against it -- but why are we so held back from proclaiming the essences of our joy in Christ, and the power of His grace to non-believers?

I think for many of us, we’re hindered from proclaiming our wonderful joy in Christ by a simple, underlying emotion, embedded deep in our hearts and minds -- fear. Fear of rejection hugely drives masses of Christians from fulfilling the duty we have. Today’s society especially fuels that raw fear by proclaiming mass acceptance, and yet brutally harasses those whose views don’t condone every behavior. When speaking to others about Christ, I’ve often been shot down as narrow-minded, and yes, even called a “Bible-thumper” (a sideways compliment to me). Yet, even these things can hurt us. The truth of the matter is, we’re afraid of rejection.

However widespread the fear of being turned down may be, I believe fear of acceptance drags us away from our responsibility just as much. After all, if someone says, “Yes” to studying the Bible with me, what am I going to tell them? Sure, I’ve learned some stuff in Bible class, and I know how God gives salvation, but what if the person I’m studying with is particularly silver-tongued and well-versed in his/her religion? What if they back me into a corner? *What if I don’t know enough to teach them?*

This is a very legitimate concern that needs to be met with careful and diligent study of the scripture for yourself (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). However, I propose that maybe you can do more than you think you can. You can spread the gospel and fulfill your duty to God.

In Acts 17, Paul and Silas continue preaching the gospel to the people of Thessalonica, converting many. However, a group of Jews who had been maliciously following their journey started a riot, and began dragging Christians out into the streets in search for Paul and Silas, proclaiming, “These men who have *turned the world upside down* have come here also.” Now, we as Christians look at the work of Paul and the rest of the apostles, and we can see the effects of their teaching today. America is filled with believers of Christ. People all around us believe in Jesus, wearing W.W.J.D. bracelets, celebrating “Christmas” as the birth of Christ, and calling themselves Christians. The spreading of Christ throughout the world seems amazing to us, but we don’t always grasp the magnitude of it. I believe this scripture helps us do that. These faithful men changed the world forever by spreading the news of Christ.

Well, that adds even more to the disheartenment brought by the massive load we seem to have in front of us – “You mean we have to live up to these guys? They *turned the world upside down!* How can I ever live up to that?”

Well, you can. And it’s not by any power of yours. It’s not by any skill of yours, or any special abilities you have. Sure, Paul was very well-educated in the ins-and-outs of not only the Jewish religion, but modern knowledge as well, not to mention inspired by the Holy Spirit. But I ask this very important question: Were Paul’s abilities what converted thousands? Was it Peter’s power of persuasion that brought 3,000 souls to God on Pentecost?

It wasn’t anything these men possessed that led people to Christ. What brought thousands upon thousands of souls to Christ and made His name so prevalent in society today was the POWER of the gospel and the good news that it brings to those who believe and follow Him. The gospel of Christ is described by Paul as, “more powerful than a two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12) and it “is the power of Christ unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). We have no need to be afraid of spreading the gospel because of any shortcomings in ourselves -- for what we lack in knowledge, speaking ability, and courage, the gospel excels in. It is what brings souls to Christ.

So I challenge you. Pick up your Bible. Find for yourself what the gospel of Christ is. Take courage, go out to the world, and be ready. You’re going to turn the world upside down.