



Declare God's Goodness

Luke 8:26–39

As Jesus was climbing out of the boat, a man who was possessed by demons came out to meet him. As soon as he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down in front of him. Then he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Please, I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had already commanded the evil spirit to come out of him.

June 19, 2016

Thoughts for the Week

Within the past few years Christ has been popularized by some, so-called evangelicals, as one whom, if a proper amount of prayer were made, would help the pious prizefighter knock another unconscious in the ring. Christ is also said to help the big league pitcher get the proper hook on his curve. In another instance He assisted an athletically minded person to win the high jump, and still another not only to come in first, but also to set a new record in the bargain. He is said also to have helped a praying businessman to beat out a competitor in a deal, to underbid a rival and to secure a coveted contract to the discomfiture of someone else trying to get it.

Thus our Lord becomes a Christ of utility, a kind of Aladdin's lamp to do minor miracles on behalf of anyone who summons Him to do their bidding. Apparently no one stops to consider that if Christ were to step into a prize ring and use His divine power to help one prizefighter to paralyze another He would be putting one fighter at a cruel disadvantage and violating every common instinct of fair play. If he were to aid one businessman to the detriment of another, He would be practicing favoritism and revealing a character wholly unlike the Bible picture of the real Christ. Furthermore, we would have the grotesque situation of the Lord of glory coming to the aid of an un-reconstructed Adam -- on Adam's terms.

All this is too horrible to contemplate, and I hope that the proponents of this modern accommodating Christ do not see the implications that lie in their shoddy doctrine. I hope, they do it in ignorance and not purposely. But perhaps they do see, and are willing, nevertheless, to offer this utilitarian Christ as the Savior of mankind. If so, then they no longer believe in the deity, nor the Lordship of Christ, in any proper definition of those words. Theirs is a Christ of carnal convenience, not too far removed from the gods of paganism.

The whole purpose of God in redemption is to make us holy and restore to us the image of God. To accomplish this, He disengages us from earthly ambitions and draws us away from the cheap and unworthy prizes that worldly men set their hearts upon. A holy man would not dream of asking God to help him beat an opponent, or win over a competitor. He would not wish to succeed if to do so another man must fail. No man in whom the Spirit dwells could bring himself to ask the Lord to help him knock another man unconscious for money or the applause of the spectators.

A Joshua fighting the battles of the Lord, a David rescuing Israel from the Philistines... this is up on a high level of moral and spiritual principle and in line with the purpose of God in history. But to teach that Christ will use His sacred power to further our worldly interests is to wrong our Lord and injure our own souls. We modern Christians need to learn the truths of the sovereignty of God and the Lordship of Christ. God will not play along with Adam. Christ will not be used by any of Adam's selfish brood. We had better learn these things fast if this generation of young Christians is to be spared the supreme tragedy of following a Christ who is merely a Christ of convenience and not the true Lord of Glory after all.

There are probably very few of us (if any) who have not at one time or another asked Jesus to bless something that would be

contrary to who He is -- contrary to what He as a loving, just, holy, and good Savior would affirm or be willing to do. I personally know there have been occasions where I have fallen into this trap, and have therefore had to ask forgiveness for asking Him to give me something my sinful nature or selfish desires wanted, rather than that which would be "in His name" or "in keeping with all that He is, and what He would want for me and others.

Praying, "in Jesus name," after all, is not simply tacking the words "in Jesus name" to the end of a prayer! A selfish, carnal, worldly prayer is never prayed "in Jesus name" even if the words "in Jesus name" are tagged onto the end of it.

It would do us good to remember who Jesus is, and what He would want us to be asking for, before we start praying, lest we inadvertently make Christ into, a Christ of carnal convenience, not too far removed from the gods of paganism.

This Weeks Quotes

If you have integrity, nothing else matters.
If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters. - *Alan Simpson*

Right is right, even if everyone is against it;
and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it. - *William Penn*

Prayer Thought – Brazil

O God, we praise you for this day and its blessings. We thank you for the joy of community, for the gifts that make us unique individuals, and for the gift of Jesus Christ who unites us and leads us toward peace.

O Compassionate One, forgive our sinful ways. Soften our hearts and remove prejudice and pride that separates us from you and from each other.

We uphold for your blessing the nation and people of Brazil. May your grace enable us to see you in those who are impoverished and oppressed, and may our encounters with them transform both our attitude toward life and the economic conditions in which they live. Through the power of your Spirit, may we have the courage to stand always on the side of your peace and your justice.

We are aware of inequalities in our world. Touch the lives of world leaders so that they will make wise decisions to benefit all nations and bring forth justice and equality so that all may live comfortably, without hunger or thirst. Amen.

One in Christ Moment

On my travels I bought a new piece of pottery with a salt glaze (a finish new to me) that I found interesting. I knew I wanted to use it for something, but I wasn't sure what for. When I got home I decided that my arrangement of dried curly willow would be perfect for it.

The old container was much wider than my new piece of pottery, yet I just grabbed the bundle thinking I could make it fit in one move. It didn't work. So I began taking apart the arrangement. As I disentwined and separated it a few pieces broke off. The breakage was minimal because I took the time to figure out how to gently pull it apart.

After I organized all the branches across my floor, I placed the new container in position and began reassembling the arrangement. I took time to reexamine and decide where I would place the branches. Some didn't go in the right place the first time and I needed to move them after I had placed other pieces of curly willow. It took more time than I initially thought.

When I finished I had a new arrangement. All the pieces were the same, but in different places. Some pieces were a little shorter because ends had broken off when I was taking it apart, but they were still a part of the arrangement.

Looking at the arrangement I smiled at the folly of my earlier thinking of being able to move the whole thing at once. Then the story of the wineskins jumped into my mind.

While one could argue that I put "old wine" into a new skin by using the same pieces of curly willow, a new creation emerged in my new piece of pottery. It is made of the same ingredients as the old, but it is made new again. Sometimes it is good to use the old in a new way. However, it doesn't always fit into its old container. *By Douglas Graves*