



The Reflector

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The Solid Foundation of God Still Stands

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Good brethren can be a source of joy, encouragement, and wholesome pride. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 1:3-4): “We are bound to *thank God always for you*, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves *boast* of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure...” (All emphasis mine, EOB)

Brethren can also disappoint us. We must not let this discourage and/or embitter us to the detriment of our service to the Master. When conscientious Christians are engaged in an intense struggle to guard and sometimes to restore the moral and doctrinal purity of the church, it is awfully discouraging to have influential brethren say and do things that adversely affects this work – especially brethren whom we personally know, love and appreciate.

Maybe we learn that a preacher, elder, or other teacher, known and respected for years by us for his strong stand on moral issues has in fact been secretly practicing immorality for years. Or, a brother whose Biblical scholarship has benefitted us greatly proves to have a “blind spot” on some vital truth. Or, we see brethren, who ought to know better, openly compromising with digressive brethren – at the very time we are fighting tooth and toenail to curb the influence of the digression on those not yet grounded in the faith. Or we may work for weeks to convince people from the community to attend a gospel meeting to study *with us*. They accept our invitation but half *of us* have left town that week. Any or all of this is almost enough to make one want to throw in the towel.

As we find ourselves in this position maybe Paul’s message to the young preacher, Timothy, would do us

good. (Read 2 Tim. 2:14-21). A summary of the message would be: “Don’t let brethren’s. misbehavior throw you.”

Paul knew how discouraging brethren could be at times. Some had criticized (judged) him when he least deserved it. (1 Cor. 4:3-5). Some had caused him a great amount of anxiety. (2 Cor. 7:5-8; 11:28). Some had loved him less when he loved them more. (2 Cor. 12:14-15). Some had shocked him by so quickly turning away from the truth to error. (Gal. 1:6). Some had forsaken him when he could have used their moral support the most. (2 Tim. 4:10,16).

Young Timothy was now learning how disappointing brethren can be. Two brethren, prominent enough for Paul to mention them by name, were spreading a cancerous message among the brethren. (2 Tim. 2:17,18). Some were being taken in by their influence. (2 Tim. 2:18). Still others were in danger of being overthrown, so Paul urges Timothy “remind them of these things” to counter this error. (2 Tim. 2:14).

Paul then reminds Timothy, beginning with verse 19, that, in spite of the disheartening demeanor of some of his brethren, certain basic facts were still true. As we struggle to do right and are discouraged by brethren’s unrighteousness, let us also remember that “nevertheless...:”

1. *The foundation of God still stands solid.* (2 Tim. 2:19) . The faith of some may have been overthrown, “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands.” Brethren may have feet of clay, but the foundation of God is still a solid rock. The revelation of God, through the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:19-3:7), is still true. The gospel plan of salvation is still valid. The pattern for the worship, work and organization of the church remains unchanged. The purpose and mission of the

church has not been overthrown. The verses that teach the pure and godly standard of living are still in the Book. The promises of God are still sure. It matters not how brethren may distort these things by their practice and pervert them by their teaching. They are still in the Book.

2. *The seal of God is still unbroken.* (2 Tim. 2:19,20). The Lord still knows those who are His. (cf. John 10:27,28). He still stands by those who “depart from iniquity.”

3. *The house of God is still great.* (2 Tim. 2:20). It is great *in spite* of the dishonorable vessels in it. (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-14). One can find all the evils of society among our own brethren. All the rotten attitudes of society are among those claiming to be Christians. All the low down meanness of our society characterize some members of the church. There are brethren who will lie, cheat, steal, curse, fornicate, etc. on the par with any worldling. “Outsiders” do not have a monopoly on spiritual ignorance and religious prejudice.

Nevertheless, God’s house is still great *because of* the honorable vessels in it – the “gold and silver.” These, like healthy organs, receive little of our attention because they demand none. They go about daily doing what they are supposed to do. Often taken for granted, but seldom complaining. They just do their work and do it well. Like humming motors, they are seldom noticed unless one just stops and thinks about what is really keeping the vehicle moving ahead. Unless the motor develops a knock, we tend to take it for granted. Like precious metal, tried and proven by fire, these will be there when we need them. As we read the reams written and hear the multitude of words spoken about problems from within, let us not forget that for each one demanding attention by his misconduct there are hundreds, who may or may not be well known, who

practice and teach the truth and uphold the hands of the faithful. Because of them, with their faith in God and His word, the house of God will remain great.

4. *The salvation of God is still personal.* (2 Tim. 2:21). “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, *he will* be a vessel for honor...” “Be diligent to present *yourself* approved to God...” (2 Tim. 2:15) (Emphasis, in these verses, mine. EOB). Let me be concerned with my purity, even when other brethren are impure. Let me be concerned with my duty, even when the rest of the church is negligent. Let me be more concerned with *my* doing than with what *we* are doing or not doing.

Let me be concerned with my part of a work, realizing that I am not responsible for all parts. In the work of evangelism and edification, let me be busy planting and watering, leaving the increase to God. (1 Cor. 3:3). Let me sow the seed faithfully, even if some does not fall on good and honest hearts. Let this joint supply its part (Eph. 4:16), even if the other parts become disjointed. Let me realize that in the final analysis God judges me as a person, not us as a people. I can be saved even if my work (the recipients of my “planting and watering”) is burned (1 Cor. 3:14,15). There were a few even in Sardis (a dead church) who had not defiled their garments. (Rev. 3:3,4).

Granted, there are a lot of things among brethren that are not right. There is much corrective work to be done. There is much to discourage us, if we let it. But, we can be faithful – remembering that the Lord is faithful. When all forsook Paul, he said, “But the Lord stood with me...” (2 Tim. 4:17) His foundation is still solid, His seal still unbroken, His house still great and His salvation is still available to each of us – even if all others reject it and are lost.

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The Importance of a Biblical Worldview

Allan Turner

All of us see ourselves and our world through a particular set of beliefs, attitudes, and values. These operate as a filter or grid through which we process all information. For the Christian, this filter or grid is shaped by the truths taught in the Bible. The Bible, of course, has a beginning and an end. Although this may seem obvious, it isn’t. Many believers, who either ignore, or are ignorant of, the beginning-to-end conti-

nunity and theme of the Bible, think they can pick up the Bible, begin reading just anywhere and, as a result, conjure God-given answers to every little personal problem they think they have. In other words, they believe there is something mysterious, even magical, about reading the Bible. They are unaware that the same rules for understanding other kinds of literature are to be applied to the Bible as well. Then, on the other

hand, there are many serious critics of the Bible who have never read it, know very little of its stories, and absolutely nothing of its general theme. Consequently, they have no appreciation at all for the superb nature of the book they criticize. However, the sincere student of the Word, the one who is willing to study to show himself approved of God, is capable of rightly dividing the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15). Not only does he know it has a beginning and an end, he also knows that in between are many different biblical stories, all of which mesh into one grand theme – the scheme of redemption. As he learns these biblical stories and comes to grips with the great scheme of redemption, the sincere student develops a biblical way of looking at himself and everything else in the world. It is this biblically based way of looking at things that I am calling a biblical worldview. Therefore, a worldview can be likened to a pair of eyeglasses through which one looks at the world – eyeglasses that focus, shape, and color all one’s experiences.

Different Worldviews and Their Consequences

Every person, whether he realizes it or not, has a worldview. The modernist, for example, sees (we’re talking worldview here) humans as purely physical machines. Blinded to the spiritual dimension of God’s creation, he believes nothing exists beyond what he can perceive with the five senses. On the other hand, the Christian sees (again, we’re talking worldview) humans as the only beings on earth who are made in God’s image. Like the modernist, he is aware of man’s physical nature; but, unlike the modernist, he is not blinded to man’s spiritual dimension.

It is true – “Ideas have consequences.” The Bible says, “[As a man] *thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7). This means that worldviews exercise tremendous influence on behavior. Because the modernist believes this physical world is all there is, he is convinced there is no life beyond the grave. Therefore, eating, drinking, and making merry are the central meaning of his life. If he can’t see it, hear it, touch it, taste it, or smell it, then it’s just not important to him. Believing “you only go around once,” and convinced that he must do just what the now famous beer commercial commanded, he uses all his energy trying to get “all the gusto” he can out of life. According to the modernist, that so-called “pie in the sky by and by” that

preachers talk about is just a bunch of religious gobble-dygook. Reflecting the hedonism inherent in his worldview, the modernist wants, even demands, his dessert right now, and he wants it with chocolate fudge and a cherry on top. Putting others before himself makes absolutely no sense, therefore, he aggressively goes through life looking out for “Number One.”

In contrast to this, the Christian, who knows who and what he is, realizes the meaning of life (i.e., “*the whole duty of man*”) is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). He knows that life on this physical plane is not all there is to living. By faith, he understands there is life beyond the grave, and this, he realizes, is associated with Christ Jesus (1 John 5:11). His “*living hope*” (1 Peter 1:3) is based on his heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20). Hence, he views himself as a stranger or pilgrim while here on this earth (Hebrews 11:3; 1 Peter 2:11). Instead of storing up his treasures “where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19-20), the Christian is laying up treasures for himself in heaven. As he develops the “mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5), he learns to humbly put others before himself (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6) and gladly bears their burdens (Galatians 6:2).

Americans Have Changed Their Worldview

As recently as 50 years ago, the majority of Americans never really questioned biblical ethics or morality. Back then, most people looked upon divorce as disgraceful. They thought pregnancy outside marriage was a disaster; that chastity was a good thing; that an honest day’s work was the responsibility of any respectable and dependable man; that honesty was the best policy, but not today. Things have changed.

Americans no longer view themselves and their world through the truths taught in the Bible. As a result, Americans teach their children that evolutionary theory is to be believed unquestionably. They teach them that there remains no objective standard for judging what is right or wrong. Spawned by the modernistic worldview, these ideas have produced the current decline of moral standards being evidenced in America. As our countrymen have learned to think in their hearts, so they have become (cf. Proverbs 23:7).

And So Has the Modern Church

This change in worldviews has profoundly affected the modern church. As a result, the modern church has

become an intellectual and spiritual disaster area. It no longer knows how to out-think, out-live, and out-die the unbeliever, and its members are certainly not the alien residents the Lord has called upon them to be (cf. 1 Peter 2:8-11; Philippians 3:20). Instead of being different, modern church members blend in nicely with the materialistic world. They yearn for and fret over the same things the modernists do.

In order to “make ends meet,” members of the modern church have abandoned their small children to strangers while they (both father and mother) go off to the work-place. They believe that “wanting what’s best for their children” equates to the accumulation of as much of this world’s goods as possible. The children of these members are forced to fend for themselves without the help and guidance of a parent in those long hours after school before their parents return from work. This ever-growing number of children has even been given its own special name. Consequently, the “latchkey” children of these modern church members learn to fend for themselves at an early age. It should be no surprise that when these abandoned children, and that’s what they are, get older, they can hardly wait to reject true religion, wrongly thinking it to be that hypocritical mumbo-jumbo their parents practice.

In addition, modern church members are always ready to assert their “right” to personal happiness, as if this were a spiritual birthright from the Lord. Bent on building their own personal kingdom, rather than enlarging the Lord’s Kingdom, modern church members are primarily interested in newer cars, larger homes, and nicer clothes. In their minds, the once-honored biblical virtues of sacrifice and conservation have been replaced with the hedonistic idea that “he who has the most toys when he dies, wins.” On such the warnings of Colossians 2:8 fall unheeded. Instead, such warnings are viewed as the shrill voice of one who has simply gotten “too fanatical” about his religion.

Because the modern church has abandoned its biblical worldview, “preaching as entertainment” is the only kind of preaching acceptable to its members. Like those spoken of in Ezekiel 33:31-32, members of the modern church are enchanted with spectator-worship. “Make me laugh, make me cry, make me happy, and make me want to sing,” they say, “but don’t you ever try to make me think, and don’t you ever ask me to change!” These twist and mold the Bible to fit the “felt

needs” of their “itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:3). To the modern church member, discerning God’s will simply means learning about the things God has approved that they have already decided they want to do. Without a biblical worldview, the idea that one should submit his or her will to the Sovereign of the universe falls on deaf ears. Self-abasement and putting others before oneself have given way to pure selfishness. Without the proper focus, the modern church member looks inward rather than upward. Instead of being in an intimate relationship with the Lord, he thinks himself to be in a “limited partnership” with Jesus. This enables him to call himself a Christian, while being totally absorbed with the pursuit of “Self.” Unless he can be “massaged” with “preaching as entertainment,” then he is unhappy, uncomfortable, and will soon be involved in some effort to get the preacher to move. Or else, he himself will be moving to a church that will meet his “felt needs.” In the modern church, the spiritual pygmies are giants, and they always win.

The Remedy

Despite what may be observed in the modern church, and in the personal lives of many who claim to be New Testament Christians, the gospel of Jesus Christ is truly a dynamic force that lives in the hearts of all true believers. Its effect is so totally radical, and the transformation it makes is so revolutionary, that the Christian is actually called a “new creature,” who, from a spiritual standpoint, has been “born again” (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:23). It is this life-changing gospel that provides the only life-giving remedy for that which ails the modern church.

The Bible makes it clear that the one who has been truly converted – i.e., the one who has been renewed and transformed in his mind (Romans 12:1-2) – will have no trouble understanding the absolute seriousness of his spiritual and intellectual quest. Accordingly, this true disciple of Christ will be willing to “gird up the loins of [his] mind” (1 Peter 1:13). As he diligently pursues his study of the Word (2 Timothy 2:15), he will learn to consistently and effectively apply to his life the Bible’s eternal truths. In doing so, he will be both “salt” and “light” to a lost and dying world (Matthew 5:13-16). Apart from this, nothing else matters. This, the Bible says, “is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Consequently, this alone is the ultimate importance – dare I say, focus – of developing a biblical worldview.