

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHANGE

There can be no more deadly doctrine than that the Holy Spirit can say one thing in one place and something entirely contradictory somewhere else. Essentially, such a practice would make the Bible useless. Was, for example, homosexuality wrong in Corinth and Rome but all right for America? On what basis would someone draw such a conclusion?

It is amazing that so many people, including so-called religious leaders, show no more respect for the Word of God than Jehoiakim, when he cut off pieces of the scroll containing God's Word and cast them into the fire (Jer. 36:23). Whereas some would not make such an open display of irreverence today, they will not hesitate to minimize or undermine the Word of God at every opportunity. If it condemns homosexuality in several passages, sympathetic Episcopalian priests, such as Bishop Spong, attempt to discredit the Bible itself.

Others are inconsistent. The archbishop of Canterbury, for example, has refused to invite practicing homosexual, Eugene Robinson, to the next global Anglican gathering, according to an AP story in the *Orlando Sentinel* (12-15-2007, page A3). But no one can accuse him of being unfair; he is also not inviting a conservative priest who objects to the ordination of homosexuals.

Of course, the whole Episcopal system of ordaining priests and having global conferences cannot be found in the Scriptures. But the issue itself cannot be dispensed with by ignoring both sides. Either homosexuality is acceptable, or it is wickedness. The Scriptures are abundantly clear that the practice is condemned, and it does not matter whether the country is England, America, or Nigeria. It does not matter if we are talking about the first century, the tenth, or the twenty-first.

It is wrong for someone to pit one verse of Scripture against another, and it is wrong for someone to have a modern-day "revelation" that contradicts what the Holy Spirit caused to be recorded and preserved in the first place. "Interpretations" that come after praying for wisdom likewise cannot oppose the written Word. God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33).

If the Holy Spirit changed His mind, God would not be dependable concerning anything—including salvation. "Well, God told me I don't have to be baptized," someone might insist. "The Holy Spirit told me I was already saved when I had that wonderful feeling ten years ago. Baptism is not necessary for my salvation."

Such a "revelation" would do away with the need for the Bible altogether. Everyone could just have his own personal Divine message. What people actually want is an exception to repentance. Most of those (although not all) who disagree with a plain passage of Scripture want to practice some kind of immorality—whether homosexuality, adultery, fornication, stealing, etc. How sad that for the sake of some fleshly sin or earthly gain people will cut up, burn, denounce, or ignore the holy Word of God! The Holy Spirit is right; we must conform ourselves to what He has declared.

Gary W. Summers, Winter Park, FL

BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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The Shedding of Tears

In the mountains of Eastern Kentucky during the sultry summer months the forest foliage would drip with water during the early morning hours. It was as if the forest foliage were shedding tears that would be absorbed by the rugged mountains never to be remembered again. Each day the process would repeat itself gathering only passive interest, if any interest at all. What about the tears Christians shed? Are they absorbed into time never to be remembered again? Are they important to anyone?

Are they the focal point of our loved ones? Are they ever remembered in kindness and love? Or are they just forgotten moments of pain that leave a scar of anguish on the heart?

God is concerned about the tears Christians shed. He is touched when His children suffer pain and their anguish is remembered in kindness and love. It is written: "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they* not in during thy book?" (Psa. 56:8). In time of distress and suffering, David understood that he was never alone, God cares. It is a tremendous picture of God's love for those who are looking to Him, described in the language of a poet. God is pictured as having a bottle in which the tears of His Children are preserved to be remembered with sympathy and compassion. The tears of His children are bottled up and viewed as special treasure by the loving Father.

The shortest verse in the New Testament shows the compassion of Jesus as He looks upon the suffering of two sisters who had just lost their brother in death. Mary and Martha had sent for Jesus to heal their brother, Lazarus, of his illness, but he died. When the Lord saw their anguish, the Scriptures teach that "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). He was touched by their pain. He felt their sorrow and He had compassion upon their loss. When going through the sorrowfulness of life it is encouraging to know that our Heavenly Father is always there to put our tears in His bottle and that Jesus can view our miseries with compassion. Yet, it is not so for those who are living apart from God. Their tears are only absorbed in time without compassion, without kindness, and without love. Those who are not in God's family have no one to gather their tears in a bottle. Truly, that is something to shed tears over.

Paul Vaughn, Lewisport, KY

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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The following is part of an editorial in the Spring 2008 issue of Evergreen magazine that is published in England:

“It was the third time that the old lady had visited the charity shop in the centre of Swansea, and as on both previous occasions she made straight for the display of second-hand clothing in the corner. There, hanging amongst the rather drab dresses and coats, like an elegant princess who had fallen on hard times, was the object of her fascination: a stylish, brightly coloured hat. Taking great care, she lifted it down and, standing in front of a mirror, gently placed it on her head. Seeing her reflection, the whole of her face lit up. What a transformation! It was so beautiful! A lady couldn't help but get admiring glances wearing a hat like that! The only other customer in the shop was a girl who was browsing through a box of dusty, long-playing records. She smiled to herself as she saw the lady gazing in the mirror.

After a few moments the lady removed the hat. She sighed as she did so and the sparkle disappeared from her eyes. Reluctantly, she replaced it back on the hanger. It wasn't very expensive, just £ 2 (approximately \$4.00 – K.J.C.), but for someone on a pension struggling to pay the bills it was a luxury she couldn't afford.

As the bell of the shop rang behind her, it was as if she had woken from a dream. She wouldn't go back there again. It had been pleasant to imagine owning such a lovely item but the few pounds in her purse were needed to pay for the necessities of life such as food.

She trudged wearily away, but had only gone a few yards when she heard the sound of someone running behind her. Suddenly the record-buying girl from the shop was standing in front of her – *and she was holding the hat!* She quickly told the old lady how she had watched her trying it on and had realized just how much the hat meant to her. She had therefore bought it for her. The elderly lady was nearly in tears: thrilled at receiving such a gift and overwhelmed by the kindness shown to her by a stranger.”

As Christians, we are admonished to show kindness to others: *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering”* (Colossians 3:12); *“And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity”* (II Peter 1:17). Again, Paul writes: *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up”* (I Corinthians 13:4); *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32). Even non-Christians are spoken of in Scripture as showing kindness as did the “barbarous” people on the island of Melita after the shipwreck of Paul and those with him on the way to Rome (Acts 28:1-2). Indeed we are commanded: *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10). That is both to Christians and to non-Christians. Our Lord said: *“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward”* (Matthew 10:42).

May we always be ready to show random acts of kindness to others whether they are our brethren or those outside of Christ.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett and mother, Kathy Treadway's mother, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick's aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron' sister who has having health problems, and Tim Smith.

Pam Gossett asked for prayers for her mother who has recently had eye surgery and for her daughter's family following the death of her father in law.

Helen Culpepper is to have cataract surgery on Tuesday.

Lanny Niver had been told he needs to stay off of his legs for the next few months only standing or sitting for short periods.

Myrtle Grimsley is not doing well at this time and asks for prayers on her behalf.

“Just Follow Your Conscience”

People say that one's conscience is a safe guide in religious Matters. They say if you will always just "follow your conscience" you will never have to be concerned about whether God approves of your life. But what is a conscience anyway? Does everyone have one? And, if we all have one, is it true that the conscience is a sort of voice from God?

New Testament writers used the word conscience some twenty-nine times. Paul said that he had lived “in all good conscience” all his life (Acts 23:1). And, in view of the resurrection and the judgment, he strove to have a “good conscience without offense toward God and men,” (Acts 24:16). He even wrote to Timothy that the threefold description of a godly life is a “pure heart,” and a “good conscience,” and a “sincere faith,” (I Tim. 1:5). Since the Bible evidently affirms that the conscience is very important, we would be well-advised to learn as much about it as we can. The word is from two roots: CON meaning according to; and SCIENCE which means knowledge. So conscience simply means “according to knowledge.” My conscience accuses me or excuses me not when I do right or wrong, but when I think I am doing right or wrong. But the measure of right and wrong is not

I think, but what God says. So, if I have no knowledge, or faulty knowledge, of God's will, then I could actually do wrong and yet be acting in good conscience. During a part of the time Paul lived in good conscience toward God he was persecuting the church with all his power and might. When Paul learned on the road to Damascus how wrong he had been he did not defend his error. He asked, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” When, in Damascus, he was told to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins,” (Acts 22:16), he again acted in good conscience by conforming his life to this new knowledge he now possessed. Had he not done so, he would have violated his conscience. The conscience is a safe guide, but only if it is safely guided by the word of God.

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