

“A Sermon on Truth”

By Dr. Bill Shade

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FORCED BY FACTS TO SPEAK

Sometimes it takes a series of things to take us over the edge. We are annoyed by one event, then we are irritated by another, and then we get beyond irritation when a third comes in quick succession. We need to be able to evaluate both the event and our response. You see, when these things occur. God is asking us to step back and take a rational look at things.

On the one hand there are irritants that are meant merely to test our patience. They are of little consequence, the important thing is how we react to them.

But there are other things which are meant to get our attention. These are not minor irritants, they are major situations that deserve our full response. We should be annoyed, no we should be irritated, – no we should be angry!

After all, we are not Buddhists ! Scripture does not teach us that we should be passive in the face of evil, or that we can make it disappear by training ourselves to deny it. Evil made our Lord angry, because He saw its consequence and knew the calamity that awaited those who tolerated it. Evil should make us angry and this past week, it finally got to me.

I quit just being irritated when some media pundit twisted the obvious out of all reason, and made myself stop and take a hard look at several things that made me just plain angry.

The first incident occurred when our President was addressing the Knesset in Israel on the 60 anniversary of the founding of the State. The presidentth dent said,

Some seem to believe that we should negotiate with the terrorists and radicals, as if some ingenious argument will persuade them they have been wrong all along. We have heard this foolish delusion before. As Nazi tanks crossed into Poland in 1939, an American senator declared: "Lord, if I could only have talked to Hitler, all this might have been avoided." We have an obligation to call this what it is — the false comfort of appeasement, which has been repeatedly discredited by history.

Now I am not sure what you heard in those words, but I am old enough to remember the triumphant Neville Chamberlain returning from his historic conference with Adolf Hitler and waving the document which they had signed in the air proclaiming, "this document assures us all that we will have peace in our time." I also remember that within a few months, Hitler invaded Poland and began the greatest conflagration the world has ever seen.

So how did America react to the President's words? Obama insisted that the speech was all about him. I wonder, does Obama have an ego problem? Hal Linsey suggested, "If the shoe fits, put it on."

Then House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who always sounds like she has just eaten a bowl of sugar before the speech to try to disguise the wormwood and the gall, climbed on board to tell us that "we never criticize the President when he is abroad (sic), and we feel betrayed that he criticized us." Well, I have the full text of the speak and I still haven't found the name Obama, or Pellosi in it - not even with word search - so if Obama and Pellosi hear their names that clearly, maybe it is because it is a perfect fit.

The point is, it is no longer politically correct to call upon history to evaluate our actions in the present. If appeasement did not work with Hitler, it will certainly not work with any other despot with ambitions of world domination, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has left little doubt

about his own. The danger here is that we no longer believe we can learn anything from history. The folly of that irrational position is, as we have been often reminded, "Those who will not learn from history, are destined to repeat it."

Then there was that statement by Hilary Clinton as she tried to defend her dogged determination to stay in the race. She was attempting to say, It ain't over until its over, and anything can happen this early in the race. Then she simply reminded her questioners that it was already June when suddenly Bobby Kennedy was shot and the whole elective equation was changed.

What happened? Obama thought it might be a suggestion on how to change the equation this time and the Kennedy family feigned unspeakable grief to be reminded of Bobby's death. So. . . Hillary had to do the politically correct thing. . . she apologized to the Kennedys for her terrible lapse of sensitivity. Look, I don't have a great deal of respect for Hillary, but this is ridiculous. Have we gotten to the place where the word doctors can do plastic surgery on everything we say until it become unrecognizable even to us. Is there really something wrong with speaking the truth? Or do we hate it so much because it is the truth?

Finally McCain disassociated himself from Rev. John Hagee because the press found something Hagee said which was as scandalous as the words of Obama's pastor and spiritual mentor Rev. Jeremiah Wright who is now famous for his declaration, "God bless America? . . .NO!, God damn America."

So what did Hagee say? In a message that sought to illustrate God's sovereign care for Israel and His determination to bring Israel finally back to the Land of Promise, Hagee had likened Hitler to a "Hunter" whom God used to bring Israel into such distress that she would be compelled to seek refuge in the land God had long prepared for her.

Now in Biblical perspective, this is not so strange an idea is it? In Isaiah God used the "fly of Egypt, the bee of Assyria" to bring disciplinary judgment upon His people. God called Assyria a "hired razor" to do His bidding - but then, of course, the entire concept of God's sovereign purposes, or His immediate involvement in human affairs, especially in discipline or judgment, is simply unfathomable to the post-modern mind.

The press went wild. To think that anyone could call Adolf Hitler an instrument of God. Voices of indignation were raised from both liberal and conservative forces and Hagee was forced to have a press conference in which he, with a Jewish Rabbi at his side, assured everyone that he was a friend of Israel and then excused McCain for disassociating himself to avoid the controversy. Of course McCain will not avoid the controversy. This is exactly what the liberals were looking for, something they could send up as a smoke screen to obscure the obviously radical rhetoric of Rev. Wright.

And why did I get angry? First, because a major political figure, and one that I will most likely be compelled to vote for, could not stand the heat of pressure from a perverted press and an uninformed electorate and make the distinction between Pastor Hagee's words, (a man who is one of the most ardent supporters of Israel this generation has ever seen, and a genuine American patriot), and the ranting of a man who holds his devotees together by feeding them on hatred and self pity. I frankly have serious differences on certain doctrinal issues with John Hagee. But I can certainly tell the difference between what he says and what Wright propagates, and I felt that it was time to stand up and shout, "Wait a minute - these two things are not the same. One is truth and one is a lie." One sometimes thinks that the poet must have had today's media in mind when he wrote: "*Truth forever on the*

scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, . . .”

The final straw was the mob mentality of everyone from both parties to “out green the greenies”. The entire world it seems has accepted the insane proposition that greenhouse gases are causing global warming. Does it matter that “More than 31,000 scientists across the United States, including more than 9,000 Ph.D.s in fields including atmospheric science, climatology, Earth science, environment and dozens of other specialties, have signed a petition rejecting the assumption that the human production of greenhouse gases is damaging Earth's climate,” (WorldNetDaily.com.). It doesn't seem so.

Or does it matter that a similar group of qualified and credentialed scientists from all over the world came together to dispute the entire proposition that what we do on earth has any major effect on atmospheric conditions. They even produced a two and a half hour documentary film titled, *“The Great Global Warming Swindle”* to prove their point. Nor does it seem to matter that some of these very scientists have had their lives threatened by the powerful Green lobby. No, to blazes with truth, evidence, science or the consequences of going down a wrong path. We will embrace political correctness. As one astute writer put it, “Politics is often a business of adaptive dishonesty, and never more so than when dealing with an issue like climate change. Real solutions are lacking so politicians can only devote themselves to telling voters what they want to hear while dishing out favors to whatever lobbyists are handy.”

It is far more satisfying to man's ego to think that he can control the atmosphere than to admit that there is something beyond his control that is going to over-ride his best, (or worse) efforts. One of the most famous political statements of all time, and one which reduced a former election to only one consideration was the statement, “It's the economy stupid.” Well, science is screaming to deaf ears, “it's the sun stupid.” That big red object up there goes through cycles when it sends out explosive gases and when it does it has a direct effect on the earth. That effect can be traced historically and warming and cooling cycles are a fact of history.

But the audacious and arrogant (but politically correct) idea, that we can control global warming, is so flattering to our ego that we love it. It is like flattering good King Canute by telling him that he could command the waves to stop. Thankfully, the story tells us that the King was wiser than his advisors, and certainly wiser than we are, and having proven to his flattering entourage that he had no power at all against an ocean, he is reputed to have told them, *“Perhaps now you will remember there is only one King who is all-powerful, and it is he who rules the sea, and holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand. I suggest you reserve your praises for him.”* Finally, someone with some sense!

And that brings me to my point and the point of my text.

1 Corinthians 13:8, ***For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.***

This is a rather strange statement on the surface and one, which I must confess, I have struggled with from time to time. There are, however, clearly three propositions here. The first is, that something called Truth actually exists. The second is the implication that we can identify it. It would be hard to do anything against something we could not identify and define. Finally, there is the clear proposition that Truth is final. Truth will win simply because Truth is Truth. Let's examine each of these three ideas

I. SOMETHING CALLED TRUTH ACTUALLY EXISTS.

In the post-modern world in which we live the whole idea of truth is unpopular. The

watchword of our times is “tolerance”. That used to be a good word, which suggested that while we would not accept or agree with someone about a matter, we would allow him to be heard and to be treated in a civil manner. That is no longer the case.

Tolerance has come to mean that all ideas are of equal value. No ideas may be discounted as false. In effect all ideas are “true.” Truth thus becomes a relative concept that can be personalized to the individual. What’s “true” to you may not be “true to me, and what is “true” to me may not be “true” to you, but your “truth” is just a valuable to you as my “truth” is to me. Does it seem to you that there is something amiss here?

Truth is defined by the standard dictionary as **“that which conforms to reality and fact - therefore that which is indisputable.”** Okay, so what happens when your “truth” does not conform to reality or fact? Presumably your “truth” is disputable, and is therefore not “truth” according to the traditional definition of the word.

In our post-modern malaise we have the ridiculous situation of a smorgasbord of contradictory ideas, all welcomed as equally “true.” The only idea that is not welcome is the idea that where ideas conflict, there is only one idea that is true and all others are not true and therefore false. The Post-modern mind cannot accept that there is Truth, and therefore it does not view any proposition as error. The question for the Post-modern is, “can you live with what you believe?” I don’t think so.

Every day we encounter life situations in which we must make choices. Even enlightened self-interest attempts to evaluate those choices and their consequences. There is a truth in everyday existence which conforms to reality and recognizes fact. If you step off the edge of a cliff or a skyscraper you will fall downward, and be seriously injured or most likely killed, and if you step in front of a speeding car you will be hit and if you drink poison you will die or be extremely sick and possibly effected for life. We encounter and accept those absolutes every day of our lives. We therefore do not live according to our professed belief that all ideas are equally true, valid and valuable.

The problem with the acceptance of all ideas as equal is that you can’t live by what you profess to believe and therefore your belief does not conform to reality and, therefore, by definition your belief is not true. The opposite of “true” is “false”, in case we might have forgotten.

The Scripture declares unequivocally that it is true. Jesus prayed, **“Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth.”** (John 17:17). Jesus taught that the Scriptures conformed to reality and fact, and were therefore True.

The Scriptures claim to be true as regards theology. They teach that God is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and transcendent. He is personal and self-existent. He is unique, that is, there is no one and nothing like Him. He says, **“I am Jehovah (the eternally self existent One), that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another. . .”** (Isaiah 42:8).

The Scriptures claim to be true as regards cosmology, that is, the creation of the universe. God says, **“To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might. For that He is strong in power; not one faileth.** (Isaiah 41:25, 26). We are told, **“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth . . .for He spake, and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast.”** (Psalms 33:6, 9).

The Scriptures claim to be true regarding Anthropology. They teach that **“God made man in His own image,”** so that he could communicate with God and have fellowship with God. But man declared his own autonomy, broke God’s commandment (which the Bible calls sin), and rebelled and thus lost his spiritual connection with God. Theologians call it the “Fall.” The result was an alienation from God experienced in loneliness, guilt, futility and despair. If that is not the truth, why does it correspond to reality, and fact? Whether we look about us or within, we are faced with the disconcerting fact that the Scriptures correspond to reality and therefore recommend themselves to us as Truth.

II. TRUTH CAN BE IDENTIFIED, OR KNOWN.

The second proposition in this verse is that Truth can be identified – it can be known. We are not the first people to have struggled with this. When Jesus was questioned by Pilate, he responded, **“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”** (John 18:37, 38). To that declaration Pilate responded in those words which echo in today’s intellectual halls, **“What is truth?”** It was not so much a question, as a caustic denial that something called “truth” could be known, or even existed.

Jesus not only claimed that He bore witness to the truth, He actually declared that He was the Truth personified. One of the most difficult verses in all of Scripture for modern man is found in John’s Gospel chapter fourteen verse six. Here Jesus, in response to the doubts and questions of His disciples says, **“I am the Way the Truth and the Life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me.”**

It was this claim and others like it, that prompted C.S. Lewis to write, *“Either Jesus was and is the Son of God, or He is lunatic on the level of a man who thinks he is a poached egg. You may brush Him aside as a mad man, or you may fall at His feet and cry, My Lord, and My God, but let us have no patronizing nonsense about His being merely a ‘Great Moral Teacher.’ He never left that avenue open to us, nor did He intend to.”*

What drove Lewis to the conclusion of Christ’s absolute Deity was a long and careful study of the life of Jesus Christ, beginning with a look at the trustworthiness of the documents which purported to record it. What Lewis concluded was that the documents are trustworthy and the record is compelling. Jesus lived a life in exact conformity to all man was meant to be and then, as the God-man he claimed to be, He died for the sins of all the world. Jesus life, and His message fit into the facts and reality that Lewis could observe all around him, and within his own soul, and thus Jesus’ claim to be the Truth allowed this prominent philosopher to at last identify what truth was, or more accurately, who Truth was.

III. TRUTH WILL ALWAYS BE TRIUMPHANT

The third proposition in this verse is simply this, Truth will always be triumphant. Have you ever tried to fight against truth or to deny truth? What happens? Each time we try we discover that the very nature of Truth itself defeats our attempts.

You say, “I do not accept that anything can be absolute truth.” Of course, the adjective “absolute” does nothing to strengthen the proposition. Truth by definition is absolute. But what have you done? You have affirmed the “truth” that “truth” does not exist. In response to your confident affirmation, I might simply ask the question, “Is your statement true?” If you tell me it is, then the proposition set forth in your statement is manifestly false.

If you affirm that truth cannot be known, once again I have to ask you, “Is what you have

said true?" If you say that it is, then you are professing to know the "truth" that the "truth" cannot be known, which is an absurdity.

If you deny the absolute, I must ask, "Are you absolutely sure there are no absolutes?" If you insist that you are absolutely sure, you have denied the truth of your statement.

You see, God knew that no one can win in a fight against the truth. Truth is truth and it is consistent with itself. When you attempt to deny truth, your denial professes the very truth you are denying. Thus your statement of denial is inconsistent with what you have denied. On the other hand, if I make the statement that there is something which conforms to reality and fact and which is indisputably called Truth, my statement is consistent with what I have said. Thus even the futile attempt to deny the Truth, or deny that there is such a thing as truth, is self defeating. **"We can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth."** On the other hand, the triumphant truth demands the consequences of living in a way that denies or contradicts reality and fact. There are immediate consequences in this life, all of which are evident on the evening news, but there are even more consequences in the future.

The Truth is that each of us is not only a creation of God, but a subject of God who will someday call us to an accounting. Scripture says, **"And as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment. . ."** (Hebrews 9:27). The Truth that each of us is accountable to God and will someday be brought to judgment, is extremely uncomfortable for any of us, but as we have seen, Truth will triumph – you can't win a fight against Truth.

The former Scriptural reality is even more uncomfortable because of another Truth. Scripture say, **"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."** (Romans 3:23) And again, **"Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."** (Galatians 6:7). The reality is that we lament daily over a world that is full of suffering, violence and evil, and as we do we confirm the reality, the fact, the Truth of what the Scriptures have said. Truth will always have the last word. But there is another Truth that gives us hope. C. S. Lewis in his Chronicles of Narnia called it, "the deep magic" or the Truth that can supercede the Truth. And that deep magic, Page -8-

that deeper truth is the Truth of the cross. It is that Truth which Paul sets forth in these words: **"(Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight."** (Colossians 1:15 - 22).

The deeper Truth is found in these words, **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, although He knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** (2Corinthians 5:21).

Finally, the Truth is found in these words, ***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. . . He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”*** (John 3:16 - 19, 36).

Remember the text? For we can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth. The truth will ultimately triumph. It will finally judge us, either in our sins as guilty and worthy of eternal separation from God in a Lake of Fire, or as forgiven by His grace for having placed our faith in Him. Only a fool would fight a war against truth. Wisdom will make Truth its friend and obey it.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” (1 John 5:11 – 13).