

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

INDEPENDENT • MISSIONARY • ESTABLISHED 1786

VOLUME 23, NO. 3

DECEMBER, 1991

OUR CONFERENCE...

Our Tenth Annual Mission Bible Conference, on October 28-30 this year, was attended by over 65 of the Lord's preachers and many, many of his people. As in past conferences, we enjoyed the spirit of unity, the fellowship with God's people, and the stirring messages from the Word.

Make plans to be with us next year--October 26-28, 1992!

Al Gormley, Pastor

RELIGIOUS BUT LOST

BY: C. D. Cole

To say that a man is religious is not necessarily saying much for his sanity or soundness or safety. The historian John Clark Ridpath has said that every man is insane on some subject. The fact is that every natural man is insane on the same subject--and the subject is religion. Paul says that the world by its own wisdom cannot know God. Some of the strangest things have been worshipped as Gods. And the most awful crimes have been committed in the name of religion. The first murder was the result of a quarrel over religion and Cain killed Abel. Martyrs to Christian truth are too numerous to number.

Since the day Adam sinned, men have been prone to worship false gods. The first form of idolatry seems to have been the worship of the heavenly bodies, such as the sun, the moon, and stars. But the things men have deified throughout human history is a sad reflection on human sanity. When Paul walked the street of proud and intellectual Athens, he found monuments to many gods and lest some god might be neglected, they had erected a monument to the unknown god. The Romans even deified abstract ideas, and when Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection, they thought he was introducing two new gods, Jesus being one and the resurrection, the other god. See Acts 17:18.

The only political nation God ever chose was Israel, the descendent of Abraham. To this people God gave all means of knowing the true God and yet with all their privileges they were continually departing from the true God to worship idols. It all shows that the human mind has been ruined by Satan. Someone has said that the worst devil is a religious devil.

We speak of heathen religions in contrast with Christianity, but even in professing Christianity there is much false religion. Every vital and saving truth of Christianity has been perverted by somebody, somewhere

at sometime.

In dealing with the sad state of Israel, Paul readily acknowledges that they are religious. But they were rejecting Jesus Christ, the very person that gives value to religion. Israel as a nation is rejected of God today because they have rejected God's Son. No individual, no people can be in God's favor who ignore God's Son. See Acts 4:12.

Of all people who would be expected to look to Jesus Christ as Savior it is the Jews and yet they are the most bitterly opposed to Jesus Christ. Let a Jew become a Christian and his people and even his own family will disown him. The Jews have a Bible that predicted the coming of the Messiah and Jesus came and fit all that was said about the Messiah, but they would not have Him. See John 1:11. How sad and yet how true!

In verses 1-4 Paul describes the sad state of Israel and his prayer for their salvation. He acknowledges that they are religious, even zealous for God. They were religious but lost. Their zeal was misdirected. They were ignorant of God's righteousness and were going about to establish their own righteousness. They would not humble themselves as sinners and trust the righteousness God had provided. They were too proud to take salvation as a gift without money and without price--they were trying to earn salvation.

Paul is here practicing what Jesus had preached. Matthew 5:41, *"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."* Paul was as intensely hated by the Jews as Christ had been. He had left Judaism and the temple worship to become a believer in Christ. The Jews thought of him as a turncoat and renegade and as a disgrace to the nation. Even Christian Jews did not think much of Paul. It is most probable that the group in Corinth that did not like him was the Jewish party. Paul wanted to be a home missionary and

preach to his own people in Jerusalem, but God told him they would not hear him and that he was sending him far hence to the Gentiles.

Paul prayed for his people but he did not compromise the truth as it is in Christ. He was not guilty of the sickly sentimentalism so prevalent today. He did not say, "I see you are very religious; you have a zeal for God. Your religion is not like mine, but one religion is as good as another and I am asking God to bless your efforts in establishing your own righteousness." No, no, he did not talk like that. But here is how he talked: "I love you and am praying for you. I admit you have a zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge. You are ignorant of God's righteousness and trying to establish your own righteousness. I am praying that God will open your eyes to the truth of how to be saved."

Now let us see what is meant by God's righteousness, or the righteousness of God as it is sometimes referred to. Romans 3:21, *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."*

Notice, (1) It does not mean the justice of God. The gospel does not save by telling us that God is just and will give the sinner what he deserves. That would not be good news, but bad news.

It is not a (2) Righteousness imparted but imputed. The righteousness of God is not imparted to the sinner who believes on Christ so that he lives right in the sight of God and never does wrong. It is righteousness imputed, which means that it is credited to the believers account in heaven. Romans 4:8, *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*

(3) It is not righteousness demanded but provided. It is righteousness provided by Jesus Christ in His obedience unto death. Righteousness is based upon obedience. The sinner has no righteous-

ness of his own for he has not obeyed the law of God. If he has any righteousness before God someone else will have to provide it--and whoever provides it will have to keep all the law of God and not only that he will have to pay the penalty for us who have not kept it. That is what Jesus Christ did. He kept the law for us and obtained righteousness for us. He paid the penalty for our failure to keep the law. Galatians 3:13, *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."* See also II Corinthians 5:21.

(4) It is righteousness received through faith. See Romans 3:22. Faith is the receiving grace. We get what Christ has done by faith, which means that we trust Him. If He is the Savior, then the way to be saved is to trust Him. See Ephesians 2:8-10.

Illustration: In the city of Rome there is a church known as "The Church of the Holy Stairs." If you were to visit this church you would not see people sitting in pews and a preacher in a pulpit. You would see people mounting stairs on their knees. According to tradition these stairs had once been erected in Pilate's judgment hall and that on the night of His betrayal, our Lord walked up these stairs. They had been brought from Palestine and placed in this church in Rome and those who mount these stairs on their knees and meditate upon the sufferings of Christ on the cross will receive a perpetual indulgence in Purgatory. And so people from all walks of life enter this church and mount these stairs on their knees in order to become right with God. A professor from the Westminster Theological Seminary, tells of seeing a priest with a group of boys come in and mount those stairs on their knees counting their rosaries or beads as they did so. And so this "Church of the Holy Stairs" does not exist to preach the gospel of Christ and Him crucified, but to furnish a place where people can get right with God by crawling up stairs on their knees. This is another example of

religious zeal without knowledge. The eternal issue is this: What does the sinner have to do in order to receive the benefits of the death of Christ? The answer men give to this question shows that there are only two religions--one labeled **DO** and the other **DONE**. One is to trust what one does; the other is trust what Christ has done. See Romans 4:16.

Theoretically, there are two ways for a person to be righteous before God. One is by keeping the law--the moral law summarized in the ten commandments; the other way is to have somebody keep the law for us.

Moses describes the righteousness which comes by keeping the law. He says, the man which does these things shall live. See Leviticus 18:5. If anybody can be found who has kept the ten commandments all his life he would live before God; that is, God will not punish anybody who keeps his law. If one should keep all the law all his days he would live, but that is not salvation, for he would not be lost. It is the sinner who is lost but if a man has never broken the law he would not be lost. We sometimes hear preachers say that it is not enough to keep the law to be saved; that one might keep the law and if he did not trust Christ he would not be saved. But if a man keeps the law he would not need to trust Christ for he would not be a sinner.

Let us remember that nobody has kept the law or can keep it. The law is holy, just, and good and men ought to keep it. But a sinner cannot keep a perfect law. Paul says that what the law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, God sent Christ to do.

Salvation by keeping the law is only theory, for nobody can keep it--this way to live before God has been set aside. The law shows the need of salvation but does not provide it. Romans 3:19-20.

The other and only way to become righteous before God is to trust Christ who is made unto us wisdom even righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Satan is a skilled pharmacist with a big drug store. He knows the

desire of the human soul for rest and peace--he knows too that true rest and peace are to be found by trusting Christ--the Christ of the cross. He keeps men blind to the true rest by offering various imitations and substitutes for real rest. In his drug-store he has the drug of deceit, the paregoric of pleasure, the morphine of materialism, the spirits of self-righteousness, the pill of procrastination--anything to keep the soul from finding rest in the blood of Christ. Look over these labels again and think of their place in human thought: DECEIT--oh, the people who are deceived by the false ways of salvation; PLEASURE--think of the multitudes who are enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season; SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS--here is a fatal drug with many, too good to be saved because they think they are too good to be damned, have no eyes for the cross because they have their eyes on their culture; PROCRASTINATION--multitudes putting off any serious thought of their need of salvation, they are always going-to, but never get around to the only thing worthwhile--the salvation of the soul. And the word keeps asking, *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation."*