

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 3

◆ SUMMER 2019

An Invitation to attend

20th World Congress International Council of Christian Churches

In praise to Almighty God, the 20th World Congress of the International Council of Christian Churches is set to meet in the beautiful South American city of Puerto Montt, Chile. The dates are January 22-29, 2020. We would like to invite our readers to attend.

A splendid job of making the many arrangements necessary for hosting such an event is being conducted by a committee of 14 local pastors. The City of Puerto Montt has been very accommodating, and has offered us the main arena in the

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GOD SHALL LAUGH

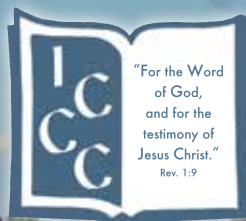
BY ROBERT W. ANDERSON

"The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming."

(Psalm 37:13)


Reverence would surely make us shrink from even thinking of God laughing, but there it is squarely before us in Psalm 37:13, "The Lord shall laugh at him [the wicked]: for he seeth that his day is coming." The same ascription occurs elsewhere in the Bible as, for instance, in Psalm 2:4, "He that sitteth in the

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January 22-29, 2020 ◆ **Puerto Montt, Chile**

REFORMATION



Beginnings

PART VIII

Martin Luther's Stand: "What Hath God Wrought?"

BY MARK W. EVANS

Once inside the gates of the German city of Worms, on April 16, 1521, Martin Luther was surrounded by friends and enemies. The unthinkable had happened. The monk had defied all threats, dangers, popish intrigues, and earnest warnings. He came to the Diet of Worms to bear a testimony to God's Word — to the death.

Escorted by a vast crowd — greater than had greeted the new emperor — the humble monk made his way to the hotel of Rhodes. A parade of guests entered his room, group by group, until late in the evening. Friends and enemies alike were astonished at his sagacity, energy, verbal ability, and authority. The next morning, Ulrich of Pappenheim, marshal of the empire, "cited him to appear at four in the afternoon before his

imperial majesty and the states of the empire."¹

The marshal and his herald found it impossible to pass through the immense crowds. They contrived a way through a private home and some gardens to bring the Reformer to the entrance doors of the Diet. Once inside, Luther stood before the emperor surrounded by civil and papal dignitaries.

The emperor's spokesman, chancellor of the Archbishop of Treves, presented Luther with two questions. Pointing to about twenty books on a table, he asked, "Do you acknowledge these books to have been written by you?" The second question was, "Are you prepared to retract these books, and their contents, or do you persist in the opinions you have advanced in them?"²

Luther responded: "Most gracious emperor! Gracious princes and lords! His imperial majesty has asked me two

questions. As to the first, I acknowledge as mine the books that have just been named: I cannot deny them.

"As to the second, seeing that it is a question which concerns faith and the salvation of souls, and in which the Word of God, the greatest and most precious treasure either in heaven or earth, is interested, I should act imprudently were I to reply without reflection. I might affirm less than the circumstance demands, or more than truth requires, and so sin against this saying of Christ: 'Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.' For this reason I entreat your imperial majesty, with all humility, to allow me time, that I may answer without offending the Word of God."³

The emperor retired to consult with his ministers and returned with his answer. His spokesman said: "Martin Luther, his imperial majesty, of his natural goodness, is very willing to grant you another day, but under condition that you make your reply *viva voce* [by word of mouth], and not in writing."⁴

"A solitary and undefended monk stood up as the representative of conscience enlightened and upheld by the Word of God. Opposed to him was a power which, wielding the armies of emperors, and the anathemas of popes, yet met utter discomfiture. And so has it been all along in the great war. Victory has been the constant attendant of the one power, defeat the as [sic] constant attendant of the other."

J.H. Merle d'Aubigne

Luther returned to his room amid dark rumors. Some predicted his execution. Others thought he was surely planning to offer a retraction and was attempting to soften his fall. After much prayer and even periods of weakness, the monk arrived at a sacred resolve. He prayed to the Lord: “I am ready.... I am ready to lay down my life for Thy truth ... patient as a lamb. For it is the cause of justice — it is Thine.... I will never separate myself from Thee; neither now, nor through eternity.... And though the world should be filled with devils — though my body, which is still the work of thy hands, should be slain, should be racked on the wheel ... cut in pieces ... reduced to ashes ... my soul is thine.... Yes! thy Word is my assurance of it. My soul belongs to thee! It shall abide for ever with thee.... Amen!... O God! help me.... Amen!”⁵

After waiting two hours in the midst of an immense crowd, Luther appeared a second time before the Diet. The chancellor began the examination: “Martin Luther! Yesterday you begged for a delay that has now expired. Assuredly it ought not to have been conceded, as every man, and especially you, who are so great and learned a doctor in the Holy Scriptures, should always be ready to answer any questions teaching his faith.... Now, therefore, reply to the question put by his majesty, who has behaved to you with so much mildness. Will you defend your books as a whole; are you ready to disavow some of them?”

Luther replied: “Most serene emperor! illustrious princes! gracious lords! I appear before you this day, in conformity with the order given me yesterday, and by God’s mercies I conjure your majesty and your august highnesses to listen graciously to the defence of a cause which I am assured is just and true....

“Yesterday, two questions were put to me on behalf of his imperial majesty: the first, if I was the author

“I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other.

Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning — unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted — and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me! Amen!”

Martin Luther

of the books whose titles were enumerated; the second, if I would retract or defend the doctrine I had taught in them. To the first question I then made answer, and I persevere in that reply.

“As for the second I have written works on many different subjects. There are some in which I have treated of faith and good works, in a manner at once so pure, so simple, and so scriptural, that even my adversaries, far from finding anything to censure in them, allow that these works are useful, and worthy of being read by all pious men.... If, therefore I were to retract these, what should I do?... Wretched man! Among all men, I alone should abandon truths that friends and enemies approve, and I should oppose what the whole world glories in confessing....

“Secondly, I have written books against the papacy, in which I have attacked those who by their false doc-

trine, their evil lives, or their scandalous example, afflict the Christian world, and destroy both body and soul. The complaints of all who fear God are confirmatory of this. Is it not evident that the human doctrines and laws of the popes entangle, torment, and vex the consciences of believers, while the crying and perpetual extortions of Rome swallow up the wealth and the riches of Christendom, and especially of this illustrious nation?...

“Were I to retract what I have said on this subject, what should I do but lend additional strength to this tyranny, and open the floodgates to a torrent of impiety? Overflowing with still greater fury than before, we should see these insolent men increase in number, behave more tyrannically and domineer more and more. And not only the yoke that now weighs upon the Christian people would be rendered heavier by my retraction, but it would become, so to speak, more legitimate, for by this very retraction it would have received the confirmation of your most serene majesty and of all the states of the holy empire. Gracious God! I should thus become a vile cloak to cover and conceal every kind of malice and tyranny!...

“Lastly, I have written books against individuals who desired to defend the Romish tyranny and to destroy the faith. I frankly confess that I may have attacked them with more acrimony than is becoming my ecclesiastical profession. I do not consider myself a saint; but I cannot disavow these writings, for by so doing I should sanction the impiety of my adversaries, and they would seize the opportunity of oppressing the people of God with still greater cruelty.

“Yet I am a mere man and not God; I shall therefore defend myself as Christ did. If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil (John 18:23), said He. How much more should I, who am but dust and ashes, and who may so easily go astray, desire every

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MARTIN LUTHER'S STAND

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man to state his objections to my doctrine!

“For this reason, by the mercy of God, I conjure you most serene emperor and you, most illustrious princes, and all men of every degree, to prove from the writings of the prophets and apostles that I have erred. As soon as I am convinced of this, I will retract every error, and be the first to lay hold of my books and throw them into the fire.

“What I have said plainly shows, I hope, that I have carefully weighed and considered the dangers of which I expose myself; but, far from being dismayed, I rejoiced to see that the Gospel is now, as in former times, a cause of trouble and dissension. This is the character — this is the destiny of the Word of God. I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword, said Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:34). God is wonderful and terrible in His counsels; beware lest by presuming to quench dissensions, you should persecute the holy Word of God, and draw down upon yourselves a frightful deluge of insurmountable dangers of present disasters, and eternal desolation....

You should fear lest the reign of this young and noble prince, on whom (under God) we build such lofty expectations, not only should begin, but continue and close, under the most gloomy auspices. I might quote many examples from the oracles of God....

“If I say these things, it is not because I think that such princes need my poor advice but because I desire to render unto Germany what she has

“God is wonderful and terrible in His counsels; beware lest by presuming to quench dissensions, you should persecute the holy Word of God, and draw down upon yourselves a frightful deluge of insurmountable dangers of present disasters, and eternal desolation....”

Martin Luther

a right to expect from her children. Thus, commending myself to your august majesty and to your most serene highnesses, I humbly entreat you not to suffer the hatred of my enemies to pour out upon me an indignation that I have not merited.”⁶

After a brief rest, the Reformer repeated his address in Latin. When he finished, the chancellor said: “You have not answered the question put to you. You were not summoned hither to call in question the decisions of councils. You are required to give a clear and precise answer. Will you, or will you not retract?” Luther answered, “Since your most serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scrip-

ture, or by the clearest reasoning — unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted — and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me! Amen!”⁷

The Diet was deeply moved. Many could not restrain their approval. The emperor stated: “This monk speaks with an intrepid heart and unshaken courage.” However, the bigots of Rome were incensed. After the initial reaction, the chancellor instructed Luther: “If you do not retract, the emperor and the states of the empire will consult what course to adopt against an incorrigible heretic.” The Reformer answered: “May God be my helper; for I can retract nothing.”⁸

Luther left the council while they deliberated. Upon his return, the chancellor presented the Diet's decision: “Martin, you have not spoken with the modesty becoming your position. The distinction you have made between your books was futile; for if you retracted those that contained your errors, the emperor would not allow the others to be burnt. It is extravagant in you to demand to be refuted by Scripture, when you are reviving heresies condemned by the general council of Constance. The emperor, therefore, calls upon you to declare simply, yes or no, whether you will retract a portion?” Luther responded: “I have no other reply to make than that which I have already made.”

Church historian J.H. Merle d'Aubigne wrote: “A solitary and undefended monk stood up as the representative of conscience enlightened and upheld by the Word of God. Opposed to him was a power which, wielding the armies of emperors, and the anathemas of popes, yet met utter discomfiture. And so has it been all along in the great war. Victory has been the constant attendant of the one power, defeat the as [*sic*] constant attendant of the other. Triumph may not

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always have come in the guise of victory; it may have come by the cord or by the axe, or by the fiery stake; it may have worn the semblance of defeat but in every case it has been real triumph to the cause, while the worldly powers which have set themselves in opposition have been slowly consumed by their own efforts, and have been undermining their dominion by the very successes which they thought were ruining their rival.”⁹ •

¹J. H. Merle d’Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, Vol. II (New York: American Tract Society, 1847), p. 234.

²*Ibid.*, p. 238.

³*Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁵J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, Vol. I (New York: Cassell and Company, Ltd., n.d.), p. 340.

⁶Merle d’Aubigne, pp. 245-248).

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 248-249.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 249-250.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 250.



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GOD SHALL LAUGH

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heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” Of whom is he speaking? Those who “take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed.”

Never think the laughter ascribed to God is out of character for Him. He is just as holy, just as good, just as glorious in His laughter as in every other revelation of Himself. We hold Him in awe when He laughs as surely as when He legislates amid the lightning and thunder of Mount Sinai.

As eyes, ears, hands and feet have been ascribed to God, so it is with laughter. Though God is a most pure

Never think the laughter ascribed to God is out of character for Him. He is just as holy, just as good, just as glorious in His laughter as in every other revelation of Himself. We hold Him in awe when He laughs as surely as when He legislates amid the lightning and thunder of Mount Sinai.

Spirit, yet He is pleased to speak of Himself in human terms. Those who rightly understand Scripture discern that fact and know better than to think God contradicts Himself. He cannot deny Himself. His laughter at the wicked expresses His contempt for the folly and long-term futility of their persecution of the godly.

When Nehemiah and his compatriots announced that they would rise and rebuild Jerusalem, which had been destroyed earlier by the Babylonians, he writes that when Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem heard their plan, “they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?” (Nehemiah 2:19). We can imagine them slapping their thighs, engaging in high fives, convulsed with laughter in their contempt for a project destined for ignominious failure. Now would you see a better contempt, a holy one?

Listen to God laugh, as with disdain He looks upon the plots and plans and cruelty of the wicked against His people. “‘Who thought’ says Luther, ‘when Christ suffered, and the Jews triumphed, that God was laughing all the time?’” (J.A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1991), p. 23.

God laughs at the wicked because He sees that their day shall come, the day of judgment, be it occasional throughout the years or in the final

and ultimate judgment. God says, “I am the Lord, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:5a), but foolish men boast before that God, saying, “We are lords, we will come no more unto thee” (Jeremiah 2:31).

Men may think they are through with the God of the Bible, but He is not through with them. “... He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him [Christ] from the dead” (Acts 17:31). That day shall come and shall not tarry.

As David writes in Psalm 11:6, “upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.”

God says, “I am the Lord, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:5a), but foolish men boast before that God, saying, “We are lords, we will come no more unto thee.” (Jeremiah 2:31).

Whenever “the wicked plotteth against the just and gnasheth upon him with his teeth,” as well as other like things attributed to the wicked through the course of the 37th Psalm, let the Christian know that the Lord “seeth that his day is coming.” Post this verse over the kitchen sink or on the door of the refrigerator. May it calm us as we listen to the evening news. Let it comfort, sustain and encourage us. •



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Embracing Change

BY BRAD K. GSELL

In corporate boardrooms and motivational meetings, “Embrace Change!” is a popular slogan. Indeed if a company is to survive, it must adapt itself to the needs of the times, with the continual introduction of new technologies and customer demands. If you are still trying to sell cassette tape recorders or mimeograph machines, you might need to change! Particularly in 21st century corporate America, “That’s the way we’ve always done it” will not win you a promotion.

The capitalist system is the best suited for this concept. Every day in every successful business the goal is to figure out methods of better pleasing customers: faster turnaround, less hassle, better product, better price, better integration of services, better service, etc. To accomplish this, new and better methods, greater efficiency, less waste, etc., are needed.

Sometimes, though, this has not been for the better. The concept of change for change’s sake does not always bring better results. It often

leads to disorientation, more mistakes, lack of focus, and so forth. When Coca-Cola debuted its “New Coke” in 1985, consumers let them

In contrast to humanity, the God of heaven is always just and does not change. He says very directly in Malachi 3:6:

“For I am the Lord, I change not.” Hebrews 13:8 tells us concerning God’s Son: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

When Christ was on earth, he preached concerning His Word: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

know quite quickly that they were not to tamper with the recipe for the original Coke!

We do have many wonderful new conveniences, new life-saving health options, and so forth. However, fallen man, left to his own devices, is always set on the course of more depravity, more brazenness in sinning, less responsibility, and more determination to boldly defy God. Younger people are turning away from the church, and not even identifying as Christian, like at no other time in our nation’s history. Our liberal politicians are running swiftly to change totally the fabric and foundation of our nation, which was built on the precepts of the Bible.

Biblical “Change” and a Changeless God

In contrast to humanity, the God of heaven is always just and does not change. He says very directly in Malachi 3:6: “For I am the Lord, I change not.” Hebrews 13:8 tells us concerning God’s Son: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” When Christ was on earth, he preached concerning His Word: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

Christians of all ages have taken great comfort in God as their “fortress” and “rock” — Biblical descriptions that show that He is solid, firm, unmovable and unchanging. In Christian theology, God is often described with the word “immutable.”

God does not change because He is indeed God. 2 Samuel 22:31 tells us: “As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler [shield] to all them that trust in Him.” As opposed to man, God is holy, and in Him is no unrighteousness at all. Men constantly change because they are sinful and limited. Yet with perfection — which word can only properly and fully be used

2 Samuel 22:31 tells us: "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler [shield] to all them that trust in Him." As opposed to man, God is holy, and in Him is no unrighteousness at all. Men constantly change because they are sinful and limited. Yet with perfection — which word can only properly and fully be used in talking about God — no change is ever needed.

in talking about God — no change is ever needed.

This is the same concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 4:15 we are told: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Nothing takes God by surprise, to force Him to have to change course. Job 36:4 tells us: "He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee." God is omniscient — He knows all things.

God's Work of Change in Believers

Yet this does not mean that God does not effect change. When God, "out of His mere good pleasure" saves a man or woman from their sin, it is indeed an incredible change! 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." In Colossians 1:13, we read that God: "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Ezekiel 36:26: "A new heart also will I give

you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

When we repent of our sins, it involves real change. We not only admit our sins and say we're sorry. No, true repentance involves changing from doing that which is evil to doing that which pleases God. Ezekiel commands the people to "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations" (Ezekiel 14:6). We turn from our rebellion against God to "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matthew 5:6).

In giving the Great Commission, Christ tells us to "preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15) and to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). We can further see what this command involves when God speaks to Paul on the road to Damascus. He tells Paul that He is sending Him as a missionary, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). We as Christians have been given a great message of change to declare to every person!

Our Blessed Hope and the Change to Come

While we are on this earth, we are to have great joy in the work that God has given each of us to do. However, our eyes are always on the heavenly kingdom to come. John Bunyan, in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, spoke of the land of "Beulah" (Isaiah 62:4), that land where God delights in His children as they long for their heavenly home. That describes all believers, who live on this earth as "strangers and pilgrims."

Henry Francis Lyte sums this up well in his hymn "Abide With Me": *Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;*

*Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see—
O Thou who changest not,
abide with me.*

But we are not in despair! All believers rejoice in Titus 2:13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

When Christ comes for His church, there will also be great change. Philippians 3:20-21 tells us: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Paul tells the church at Corinth: "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:49-53). •



AN INVITATION ...

Continued from page 1

center of the city for our opening and closing meetings. Quite a large group is expected, with hundreds planning to come from local churches, in addition to all those from around the world.

In the Lord's providence, "God Is Love," from 1 John 4, was chosen as the Congress theme, with 1 John 4:10 as the theme verse: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Several months later, the World Council of Churches announced that the theme of its 2021 World Assembly in Germany will be: "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity." They have already made clear that the "love" of which they speak has little to do with the precious gospel of Christ, and more to

do with a socialist political agenda, which is against the Word of God. This will give us a great opportunity to present the true gospel and to warn against the WCC's false agenda.

Through the messages, resolutions, press interviews, etc., the ICCC continues to present a united witness throughout the world for Biblical truth and against apostasy and unbelief. It is also a tremendous encouragement and aid to many faithful churches and their leaders, who sacrifice and struggle to serve Christ in remote areas of the world.

Often, the press covers the Congresses, which helps get the ICCC's Biblical message out to a large number of people. ICCC leaders frequently are asked by both the secular and religious press for interviews when they visit various countries.

The ICCC was founded in 1948 in Amsterdam, and is comprised of Bible-believing churches of different Protestant backgrounds

which stand together "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9). Unlike the WCC, the ICCC respects the distinctives of each Bible-believing group in its membership, and in no way seeks to develop a "one world church."

If you would like to help

The ICCC is attempting to be as frugal as possible with the funds God has entrusted to it. Neither the officers of the ICCC, nor members of the local planning committee, receive any salary. Many, out of love to the Lord, are volunteering their services. Even some Christian university students in South America have written, offering their help in their different areas of expertise.

We would ask you to prayerfully consider giving to this cause. There is the need for one-time as well as regular support for the work of the Council to continue into the future. Any desiring to make a donation should make their checks payable to the ICCC. Funds are greatly needed for the General Fund to help defray the costs of the Congress and other ongoing expenses.

The ICCC does not cover the travel costs of any delegates, but we do have a fund to help some from poorer nations in the world. There are several delegates who still need support.

Matching gift: There is one pledge for \$850 toward the expenses of one of the African delegates — provided it is matched with an \$850 gift, or a number of smaller gifts equaling that amount.

International Council of Christian Churches

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“A Word Fitly Spoken ...”

THE CHRISTIAN AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media presents a unique challenge to the Christian. Many of us enjoy Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc., to find out what’s going on with our friends and to see photos of their cherished moments.

However, these portals allow us to express opinions on a whole range of social, religious and political issues. If one does not personally write out their own views, there are plenty of memes and links to articles to pass along.

Discussions can be profitable. Sometimes a friend or distant acquaintance can voice an idea that we never thought of. Proverbs 27:17 tells us: “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

But, we must be very careful that we don’t allow frustration or opposition to others’ views to lead us to

make comments or share things which are not profitable and, frankly, un-Christian.

Following are a few rules that we should all keep in mind:

1 Make sure you have your facts straight.

Check your facts before you post. Just because something might sound true concerning our opponents, doesn’t make it so. It is far better to pass on something we can’t verify than to post and be sorry. The Ninth Commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,” applies equally to our friends and our enemies. Further, if you post untrue or sensationalized things, your future posts may be ignored by those they could help.

There is so much untruth being promulgated by virtually all of the

media, that it is important that we listen to a speech, seek primary documentation to verify a fact, seek additional facts that may have an impact on the assertion being made, and so forth.

2 Make sure you don’t selectively choose facts to support your ideas.

Cutting facts out of their context is not presenting the truth. Each tidbit may be technically true, but if they are pasted together so a false picture is presented, then it is no more the truth than if you presented outright lies. The liberal media and politicians do this as a matter of course. That NEVER gives us an excuse for doing the same thing. Only that which is fair and honest will ever be acceptable to the Lord.

3 Shun *ad hominem* attacks and deal with the issues.

Stick with the issues. Seeking to demean or caricature the person with whom you disagree only diminishes yourself. It is not a person’s looks, the way he speaks, or any other such things that matter. The issues must be THE focus.

4 Refuse to display items containing profanity or which take God’s name in vain.

Even if a meme or a post describes something accurately, but uses crude or profane language — or worse yet, takes God’s name in vain — DO NOT pass it on. We as Christians must never lower ourselves to such things. It is a terrible testimony and accomplishes nothing to advance any discussion. Even the use of the words “hell,” “heaven,” or any other Biblical teaching in an inappropriate way must be totally forsaken. We must be careful that we are not passing something on which is indeed a sin against God. I am saddened when I see this taking place with far too great a frequency, even by some very good people.

5 Avoid Speculation and Conspiracy Theories.

There may appear to be connections between certain events and people. But, unless you have solid evidence, it is best to refrain from such speculation. It is also wise not to judge motives, if there is not clear proof that someone said or did something for a particular reason.

6 Avoid undue emotion and stick with that which is Biblical.

Responses based on Biblical truth will never let us down. Furthermore, our conversation must be reasoned and logical. Emotional arguments rarely meet this criterion, being based on feelings rather than facts.

7 “Be ye kind one to another” in declaring the truth.

There is nothing wrong with forthrightly declaring “Thus saith the Lord,” or showing the fallacy of an argument, but our goal is not to demean or humiliate someone with whom we disagree. It is simply to present the truth.

Even if someone “attacks” you unfairly, NEVER reciprocate. Make sure the attack is not deserved, and then take comfort in Christ’s words: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matthew 5:11).

8 Pray and give consideration to your answers.

When we used to communicate through letters, the letter had to be written, we often edited it, and then addressed an envelope, put on the stamp and took it to the mailbox. Those intermediate steps gave time for reflection and consideration. With social media, we can quickly type a response and hit Send — all in less than a minute. This gives no time to stop and weigh our words. Stop and pray to the Lord, and consider your words. Only then hit Send — or maybe not!

9 Keep things in perspective and seek the Lord in all that you do.

Make sure you do not allow social media to divert you and take time away from your service to the Lord, your family, and other responsibilities you have. We are facing a generation that is more “connected” than ever before, yet which is lonelier and more isolated than at any time in history.

Be careful! Seek to do more things in person with other people.

As with any other thing in life, we must bring our practice and motivations into conformity with God’s Word and what He would have us to do.

Colossians 4:6 tells us: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” •



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“That Ye Might Walk Worthy ...”

BY BRAD K. GSELL

“... And to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Colossians 1:9-12

This is an excerpt of a message delivered in January 2019 in the Montserrat and Los Angeles Fundamental Biblical Presbyterian churches of Guatemala City, Guatemala.

I would like to begin by extending greetings from our churches in the United States, as well as all of those who, like you, are a part of the International Council of Christian Churches. It is a great joy to be with you today.

Our message this morning is from the Book of Colossians, which is one of what we call Paul’s Prison Epistles. The Apostle Paul was in a Roman prison, but the Lord laid it upon his heart to write to the Church at Colossae, a place he had never visited. He included Timothy, his son in the faith, in his greetings to this church.

Paul had heard from other believers of the Colossians’ faithfulness to Christ and the love they had for their Christian brethren. Just like Paul and Timothy, this is the first time we have visited your church, but for many years we have heard reports of your love for Christ and faithfulness to God’s Word. We thank the Lord for your witness and have prayed for your church and all those in CIEF-

Guatemala. We, likewise, ask you to pray for our churches in the United States and all around the world.

Paul reminds them in verses 5 and 6 of “the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.”

At some point in each of our lives, someone brought the precious Gospel of Christ to us. The Holy Spirit brought forth fruit in our lives and we became new creatures in Christ. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, declared the truth that “... if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This hope laid up in heaven, of which Paul here speaks, is not just something we wish would happen. It is not at all like when we say, “I hope I will be able to get a new pair of shoes.” No! When we become a new creature in Christ, this treasure is already there in heaven — just like if we have money in the bank. It is something we can trust completely. It is something secure. It is something

already paid for by the precious blood of Christ.

Paul had a particular concern for this church because there were false teachers seeking to draw some away from the truths of Scripture. Paul warned against these false teachers. However, he also showed his complete support and confidence in their pastor.

In verse 7, he writes: “As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.” And Paul reveals that it was this dear minister, Epaphras, who told him of the Colossian church’s love for Christ. All of us can thank the Lord when he has given us “a faithful minister in Christ” to preach the Word to us.

Since Paul had never been to the Colossian church, and didn’t know any of the people personally, he could have read the letters he received from Epaphras and promptly forgot about them. But, we as Christians have a duty to be concerned for the spiritual welfare of all of our brethren in our local congregation as well as those all around the world.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the church: “But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. That there should be no schism [or division] in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

And what was Paul’s desire for them. He writes in Colossians 1:9-12: “... And to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

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What is the best way to defeat false teachers and to become more like Christ? It is by “having knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Paul is quick to differentiate between common knowledge, wisdom and understanding. We can gain much knowledge and discernment in our jobs, whether we are a mechanic, a farmer, a baker, or whatever.

But the knowledge Paul is talking about is only found in the Word of God, by His Holy Spirit leading us “into all truth.” He didn’t just say that they needed a little wisdom and understanding, but rather he says, “ALL wisdom and understanding.” David prayed to the Lord, “O how love I thy law. It is my meditation all the day.” We should delight in God’s Word and study and meditate upon it every day.

When Paul was writing to Timothy, the same Timothy who he included in his greetings to the Colossian church, he wrote: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in right-

eousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

And what he here told Timothy, he says very similarly to the Church at Colossae. Why did they need knowledge and all wisdom and spiritual understanding? We will again repeat his answer: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

When we as believers steadily increase in our spiritual understanding, God works in us to make us more like His dear Son, “being fruitful in every good work.” These good works are the fruit of a heart that loves the Lord, but they in no way — not even the tiniest little bit — merit our salvation.

The Prophet Isaiah tells us that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6)! But, when we love the Lord, seeking to do that which is good is not just something we decide to do occasionally, but Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:8 that we are to “ABOUND to every good work.” It should be our constant joy as sons and daughters of God, and something we seek to do continually!

Paul again quickly points out that our spiritual strength, which produces patience, longsuffering and joy, is ONLY “according to God’s glorious power,” and that our thanks should be to God ALONE “which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” We can not be proud or boastful, because the work in our hearts is done by God alone.

We see this reference to the “saints in light.” What is he referring to? In the next verse, verse 13, he contrasts

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"THAT YE MIGHT WALK WORTHY...."

Continued from page 13

this with the old devil: "[God] hath delivered us from the power of darkness [Satan], and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

He did not just do a repair job on us, painting over our old ugly, wicked hearts. No, we are made NEW creatures, and OLD things are passed away." We have been delivered and transformed into the children of God. John tells us that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (John 1:5). We have our inheritance in the presence of God in heaven.

When we see the word "inheritance," we often think of parents leaving something to their children. The Bible teaches us that God has adopted each believer into His family, and has given us all the privileges that belong to the sons of God.

Paul reminds them next that they became children of God ONLY through Christ: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). Our salvation is only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. One hymn writer wrote: "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

This teaching of adoption is made very clear in the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. He wrote: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

He likewise told the Christians in Rome: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adop-

tion, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:14-17).

What a glorious thing that we can rightly claim to be children of God, washed in the blood of the Lamb!

There were many deceivers in the early church. In chapter 1:28, Paul

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tells them that his ministry is to preach Christ, but he must also warn every man, and teach every man "in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Some taught that Christ was created as a lesser being by the Father at some specific point in time. This same issue became a major controversy a few centuries later in the early church.

In refutation, Paul shows them that this Jesus, who had saved them, was indeed very God of very God. Verses 15 to 17 tell us: "Who [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."

Paul instructs them that Christ was "the first born," begotten of the

Father from all eternity, "the express image of His person," (Hebrews 1:3). Indeed, Jesus Christ Himself declared to Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Christ is the eternal Son of God. Our Westminster Catechism says that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are "the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

Christ is not only our Saviour, but also our Creator. John 1:1-3 says of Christ, the living Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Here John clearly declares that Christ is indeed God, from all eternity past, and will continue on forever. Nothing in the entire universe is here that was not brought into existence by the word of His power!

Christ is not only the Creator, but He is the head of the Church, then as well as today. In Colossians 1:18-20, Paul states: "And he [Christ] 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."

Here we see this term "firstborn" used again. We just saw that He is referred to as the "firstborn of every creature." Here, he is called the "firstborn from the dead." Christ, as very God, was the first and only one who rose from the dead by His own power, and He was declared to be "the Son of God with power." Without His resurrection from the dead, you and I would die in our sins and be destined for eternal punishment.

Paul tells the Corinthians: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also

vain.... For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep [who have died] in Christ are perished” (1 Corinthians 15:14,16,17,18).

But, at the end of this same chapter, verses 52 to 57, Paul gives this great promise from God, which has been a great comfort to God’s people over the millennia: “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of

death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In the second chapter of Colossians, Paul exhorts and warns the believers again: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:6-10).

May the Lord Jesus Christ have preeminence in everything we do, each and every day of our lives, and

may it be our abiding desire to “be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

May the Lord’s blessing be with you. •



Mr. Brad Gsell is an elder of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, NC, and President of the International Council of Christian Churches and of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.

Blaming the “Purity Culture”

Beginning in the late 1980s, many evangelical groups developed and promoted a number of programs in what has been called the “Purity Movement.” The Southern Baptist Convention’s “True Love Waits,” was one of the first.

Thousands of evangelical teens signed “purity pledges,” and wore “purity rings.” The basic emphasis — if not some of the methods — appeared to be Biblical.

Recently, Joshua Harris, a leader in that movement who wrote a much lauded book entitled *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, announced that he no longer considers himself to be a Christian. He renounced much that he had written. This has brought the subject back into the limelight.

Also, Linda Kay Klein has written a book entitled *Pure: Inside the Evangelical Movement That Shamed a Generation of Young Women and How I Broke Free*. Of course the secular press

loves any opportunity to paint evangelical teaching as abusive and wrong, so have thus given wide coverage to her book. It is being blamed on everything from “body shaming,” “eating disorders,” “wounds,” “trauma,” and — amazingly — the rise of Donald Trump! Even some “Christian” media outlets have joined the fray.

Despite whether some evangelical leaders might have said something out of line, we must look to the Bible — God’s Word. It is God who tells us in the Seventh Commandment: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Jesus Christ, Himself, further elucidates, in the Beatitudes, what is meant (Matthew 5:28). Indeed, the whole Bible warns against all kinds of immorality.

The Apostle Peter exhorts believers: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul ...” (1 Peter 2:11). He tells us that disobeying God’s clear commands does great spiritual damage.

The Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, his young son in the faith, gives this same concise and clear exhortation: “Flee also youthful lusts ...” (2 Timothy 2:22). But, he does not stop there.

He tells him not just what he should not do, but what he should do in its place: “but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Those who are trying to live a “good life” through their own initiative, and those who reject the Bible’s clear teaching on morality and godly living, are quick to blame others for their shortcomings.

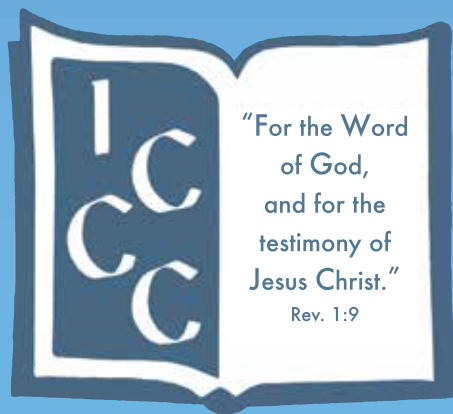
The true child of God must be like the Publican in Luke 18:13. He did not blame others, but took full responsibility for his own sin: “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” •

GOD IS LOVE

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

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