



November 14, 2010

They Just Couldn't Let Go

Our earliest lessons are the most powerful in our lives and we can understand why it must have been so difficult for the Jews to come to terms with Christ as the Messiah. After the church was established the idea of circumcision and certain traditions that were part of the observance of the Law of Moses troubled early Christians. Believing that any deviation from tradition would cut one off from God is a sobering thought to say the least. We can understand then why there is such a problem for them. As we try to teach others the Gospel today we run into the same problem. People may have been raised in a particular religious tradition that has become part of their heritage. The influence of family history on the ability or willingness to accept that Gospel is a powerful force that wields considerable restrictions to what one is willing to accept. As we face the task of trying to convince others of the teachings of the New Testament we need to remind ourselves of the apostle Paul's instructions. He told Timothy, "***And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.***" (2 Tim 2.24-26). The idea that what one believes is wrong is foreign to the thinking of most folks. Unless we see the proof, we are not going to accept it. Therein lies the problem. Too many times getting others to examine the evidence, contained in the scriptural record, is difficult to do. Too many are comfortable having what they believe interpreted for them and handed to them in a manner that allows them to adjust this information to accommodate their personal convictions. We might hear others say they are pleased with their church or religion and dismiss the idea of engaging in study. Comfort can be drawn from not knowing and the Biblical message carries with it some disquieting thoughts. One of these is a reality that Christ spoke of when he stated, "***Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.***" (Matt 7.13-14). The path that God would have us follow is not hard to find nor is it incredibly hard, but it begins with fighting the hardest battle one will ever fight and that is with ourselves. Our history and traditions become a matter of the heart and represent emotional ties to those we love and have even lost. For that reason we also hear someone make the comment that if what they believe in was good enough for the dead relatives, it's good enough for them. We may come off looking rude and intrusive but the question that begs to be answered is whether or not what one believes is pleasing to the Lord. We may not realize that our concept and image of God is also driven in part by the ideas we have learned from our childhood. Challenging these is perhaps akin to the world coming to an end. When we place ourselves in someone else's shoes and imagine a conversation in which our beliefs are challenged, we can understand what they must feel and think. We also realize that no matter what the odds are there is no room for failure. Our immortal soul hangs in the balance based on the decisions that we make in this lifetime. Knowing that makes it even harder to understand why so many will trust their spiritual well being with someone who does not hold to what God's word teaches. God wants each of us to make a decision based on knowledge, not a lack of the same. Paul states, "***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.***"

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