

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

March 10

2019

The Real Problem

I find it interesting to hear various individuals expressing their opinions as to what the greatest danger or problem may be for mankind today. I just heard one woman state that climate change is the greatest problem we face. Those who have high moral values lament the practice of homosexuality and abortion. Even though I agree with these I am convinced that homosexuality and abortion (or any other sin) is the fruit of the real problem.

The apostle Paul deals with these sins (homosexuality and abortion) and others in the first chapter of Romans. He mentions *“unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful”* (Romans 1:29-31). Without natural affection surely describes abortion. Natural affection describes the natural love and affection a mother has for her offspring. This is even seen in the animal world. A mother animal will do all she possibly can to defend her offspring. When a mother is willing to kill her unborn baby she truly is without natural affection.

Again, as horrible as all these sins may be they are the fruit of the real problem. Paul tells us what the real problem is. He says, *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave*

them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;” (Romans 1:28). When man refuses to retain God in his knowledge the result is the behavior Paul describes. We see this in our society today. Every effort is being put forth to rid our country of any mention of God.

Three times (verses 24, 26 and 28) Paul uses expressions (*“God gave them over; God gave them up”*) showing that they would suffer the consequences of their actions. Robert Turner used to say that this simply means that God let them “stew in their own juice.” I have heard others say, “You made your bed, now lie in it.” However you may express it, the meaning is still the same, you will suffer the consequences of your decisions and actions. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* (Galatians 6:7)

Until man acknowledges God and His will we will continue to see the fruits of unbelief.

✍ James Hahn



"Abraham Believed God"

To be justified is to be pronounced “free of guilt,” and this condition can be attained before God in only two ways: obey law so perfectly that you never sin (Romans 2:13; Galatians 3:10ff); or having sinned, to receive God’s forgiveness. Since “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23), to seek justification via a “law” system is to place oneself under the curse (of demanded perfection). Salvation must be found in Christ who redeemed us from the curse of law, “being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). But this calls for “faith” in Christ (Romans 2:34-26). This is the setting for Paul’s conclusion: “a man is justified by faith without... deeds of... law” (3:28). He assures us this does not “make void... law,” but “establishes... law” (3:31; no “the” in the Greek text).

When Paul presents Abraham as an example of one justified by faith (Romans 4:1ff), he is contrasting humble trust in God’s mercy (for forgiveness, 4:6-8) with arrogant trust in self (to obey law

perfectly, 4:4). Note: “if Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory;” and “the reward... reckoned... of debt” (verses 2, 4). In this context, “to him that worketh not” refers to one who realizes his imperfections, and does not claim justification on a “law” basis, but “believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly” (vs. 5). All is clear if taken in context. But to those who believe man is totally depraved and must have some miraculous regeneration, Abraham’s “faith” becomes an “experience,” or “faith only;” and “not by works” is thought to negate the relation between obedience of faith and righteousness. If we would have faith like Abraham, we must understand the quality and character of this faith.

Before Abraham left Mesopotamia, God appeared to him with a call and a promise, Acts 7:26. Abraham “obeyed” and “went out” by faith, Heb. 11:8ff. Later, at age 75, he left Haran for Canaan, Genesis 12:4. God appeared to him at Shechem, and we are told he built an altar to the Lord and “called upon the name of Jehovah” (12:7-8; 13:4, 18). When war broke out and Abram rescued Lot, he paid tithes to Melchizedek, priest of God; and Melchizedek, a type of Christ, “blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High” (14:18-19). All this BEFORE it was said of Abraham that he “believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Clearly, that particular testimony does not mark an initial “experience of faith.”

In fact, the statement “he believed... and He reckoned it to him for righteousness” is made at three very different periods in Abraham’s life. (1) In Genesis 15:6, when told he would have innumerable descendants, he demonstrated a continuation of faith long established (above). (2) Romans 4:19-22 tells us that near age 100 he believed God relative to Sarah’s having a child, “and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” (3) Again when Isaac was a “lad” (old enough to carry firewood into the mountains with his father – Genesis 22:6), Abraham’s faith was tested and it was said he “believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness” (James 2:23). The “faith” of Abraham was no miraculous experience. It was a life of humble obedience and service in keeping with God’s revealed will. Justification was no single event in time, but kept pace with Abraham’s faith throughout his life.

Abraham did not earn or merit justification, nor was Christ’s perfect life “put to his account.” Romans 4:3 says “it [his faith] was counted unto him for [Greek: EIS, unto] righteousness.” This “blessedness” is then defined as the forgiveness of his sins, 4:6-8. The procuring MEANS of our salvation is Jesus Christ, the OPERATION is forgiveness, and the CONDITION is faith as defined and exemplified in the life of Abraham. We come into Christ “by faith... for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” and become Abraham’s seed (Galatians 3:26-27). When our faith is enough like Abraham’s that we do His bidding, we are forgiven of past sins. As we continue to walk in the path of faith, confessing sins and praying for forgiveness, we have Christ as Advocate and means of further mercy, 1 John 1:5ff.

Note the characteristics of Abraham’s faith in Hebrews 11. (1) It was centered on God, not on himself. (2) It led him to obey, “not knowing whither he went.” (3) In faith, he sought a heavenly city and eternal goals. (4) His faith was such that he did not waver, looking back. (5) It enabled him to meet the rigid test of offering his son. Little wonder it was said repeatedly that his faith was counted to him for righteousness. And Paul told the Romans, “It was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (4:23-24). *✍ Robert F. Turner*

Belleville church of Christ
 5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258
www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

James Hahn (317) 443-1938