

What is Your Stand 1

Josh 24:15

2

14 "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. **15** "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

This is one of the most powerful statements in all the scriptures. Joshua has just reviewed the history of the Jews and pointed out to them all that God had done for them. He then tells them to serve the Lord, the same Lord that has done all of this for them. Note that not only does he tell them to serve the Lord, but he tells them how, in sincerity and truth. Here are the two dynamics that are absolutely necessary for man to find righteousness in his worship of God...

3

1) Sincerity

2) Truth

God has given man His truth to guide him into all righteousness in his relationship with His creator.

John 16:13

4

13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

Here Christ tells His disciples that the Holy Spirit, as the comforter, would come to them and guide them into all knowledge and truth. Now, while the context of this statement is for the disciples and foretells the events of Acts 2, the principle contained within it, that the Word of God, as seen in the scriptures that was delivered through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, can and will guide all who allow it to and welcome it into their hearts and minds, into all knowledge and truth.

That's God's part. He has given man everything man needs...

2 Peter 1:2-3

5

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; **3** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence

Man's part is the sincerity that Joshua talks about. Man must come to God in all sincerity of faith...

Heb 11:6

6

6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Christ speaks to this in His parable of the sower...

Luke 8:15

7

15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

The idea of sincerity is seen in what Christ says here. Sincerity is manifested in an honest and good heart. That is what Joshua refers to. God has given man His truth and it is up to man to believe in that truth and come to God through Christ and that truth.

That is what Joshua was telling the Israelites. They had to stand for God. And that is exactly what Joshua tells them in the passage we began with.

8

"We will serve the Lord"

Over the past few years we have seen some rather disturbing trends in the so called religious world. Groups that once held a conservative view of God's truth are turning away from that truth in droves. We see a rapid decline in the hold that some once had for God's Word, we see a disdain for what the scriptures teach, in search of being more politically correct or in an effort to becoming more attractive to the world at large. New Testament Christianity is in a battle for the truth and it's purity.

Acts 19:23-26

9

23 And about that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way. **24** For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; **25** these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. **26** "And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.

Sometimes it might seem that the people of that day were so entrenched in their idol worship that they didn't understand the concept of idol worship, but notice what Demetrius, the silversmith says, gods made with hands are no gods at all. They understood, at least to the point that they knew that this new teaching was eroding their business.

When I read this, I have a hard time not thinking of places like Las Vegas or other tourist type areas that cater to the "Adult" ideas of entertainment. In 2001, PDM asked me to help establish a new office in Las Vegas, I wound up having to spend some time there getting things going. This was just about the time that the casinos there decided to make themselves more family friendly. They put in things like roller coasters, arcades, and mid way type games, the MGM went so far as to put kiddie type rides and entertainment in. This effort was rather short lived. They discovered that people didn't want to come to places like Las Vegas for family fun. That's an important point, people didn't want family fun, they had Disney Land for that, they wanted "Adult" fun, they wanted an excuse to do what they shouldn't while feeling it was OK. Notice their new slogan, "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas". But I digress; let me get off my soap box. The point is that there are things in this world that are fundamentally opposed to living a righteous life. This is where we find Paul. Ephesus was a city for "Adults", adults that enjoyed the pleasures of idolatrous worship in temples that were far more houses of pleasure than they were houses of God. The problem is that the teaching of God's truth was beginning to cause people to realize that the pursuit of their own desires was not compatible with God's desire that all men repent and come to Him and once this realization motivated them to come to God, they quit engaging in the sinful idolatrous worship of Artemis, Diana.

Note what is happening today. The religious world is welcoming with open arms homosexuality, women in the roles of preachers, deacons, deaconesses, and Elders. The scriptures expressly forbid these things, but because teaching against is no longer politically correct, the scriptures are being put aside in order to be more acceptable to the world.

This is not new, note...

Acts 19:25-26

10

25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. 26 "You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.

Do you see what Demetrius is arguing? This Paul is teaching that the idols that the silversmiths were making a living off of were in fact not gods. The more people believed what Paul was saying, the less of their idols they were selling, so they created a great disturbance.

Isn't that what is happening today. We don't see the riots or violent persecution against the Church, at least in this country, but we are seeing stronger and stronger subtle attacks on the very faith that we profess. The more people move away from the faith of God's Word, the more enabled those in authority feel, because of the people's lack of faith in God, to try and enact laws which will strike at the very fabric of our faith.

We are seeing this happening already. Note what Demetrius says...

Acts 19:27-28

11

27 "And not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship should even be dethroned from her magnificence." 28 And when they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

We can see the progression of what Demetrius and the others are saying. Not only are people not buying the statues they are making but they see the very real danger that the temple and worship of the goddess idol could very well become worthless and she might lose her place of importance in peoples lives. Demetrius was willing to do whatever it took to protect the way of life that he had come to know and love and profit from. He didn't want to see it come to an end. He wanted to see it protected and he was willing to cause a stir to do just that.

How is this any different from how we see people react today to God's word and its teachings?

1 Peter 3:21

12

21 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

What lengths are people willing to go to in order to protect the way of life or structure of belief they are comfortable with? Baptism is not necessary for salvation, or it can take the form of pouring or sprinkling. How far will they go? How about tearing pages out the Bible, or rewriting it to say what they want it to say? I watched a Baptist preacher tell one of the members of his congregation that he would explain later what **Mk. 16:15-16** really means. Huh? It doesn't mean that the person who believes and is baptized will be saved? That is what it says.

Eph 5:18-19

13

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Yes, David used instruments in his celebrations and praise unto God. Instrumental music sounds better, it makes us sound better, it keeps us on pitch and in tempo. Yes, the passage tells us to "SING", but that's not what it really means. God's word is just a guideline, not an absolute law.

Eph 2:4-5

14

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

See, even the scriptures teach that we are saved by grace. So the world teaches that that means there is nothing for man to do. See the difference? Not that there is nothing man *CAN* do to effect his salvation, but that there is nothing *FOR* man to do to effect his salvation. The first recognizes our total dependence on God's grace and mercy combined with our faithful obedience for our salvation, while the second speaks to whether or not there is anything *FOR* man to do.

James 2:26

15

26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

The fact that James tells us that we have to obey apparently isn't relevant, nor is the fact that Christ tells us if we love Him we will keep His commandments, **Jn 14:15**.

Matt 25:37-40

16

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry , and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? 38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 'And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

Christ's point is that when we act as Christians should toward others, we are acting that way towards Him. That's works, the things that we do.

2 Tim 3:16-17

17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

1 Cor 13:9-10

18

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

God has given us, through His inspired scriptures, everything that we need to be complete as His children. Yet the world would have us believe that God is still revealing His instructions to man, even today. Some look to the head of their church for revelation, others believe that God has revealed another truth that even at times contradicts the Word as He revealed it through the Apostles and those that were inspired by God to write in the first century.

Eph 4:4-6

19

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord , one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Paul sums it all up here in Ephesians. There is one God, one Lord, Christ, one Spirit, one faith, the Word, one baptism, immersion. When the topic of God is discussed in the religious world, it seems that God engenders the least of argument. There is still some, but most religions accept that there is a God the Father. There are some religions who argue the point, but even those religions profess to have a single all powerful deity, even if it isn't the God of the Bible. There starts to be a little more discussion when we get to Christ. There are those that teach He was just a prophet, like

Moses or Elijah, or that, while a good man, He was not deity. When the talk gets to the faith, or the Word, the discussion goes a thousand different ways.

What does it mean, one faith? Is it talking about the Church? Is it talking about the credos and tenants of the Church? Either way, do you see the problems this creates? Demetrius saw the problem with accepting what Paul was teaching in Acts. If the people accepted and began to practice what Paul was teaching they would come to the understanding that idolatry is sinful, that the practices in the temples were sinful, and they would no longer participate in those practices or buy the idols. That same principle applies today. If the people believe that the Gospel is from God and is to be obeyed, then the power that the government has begins to wane in enacting laws that will prohibit that Law from being taught because the people won't allow it to.

If **Eph 4** is understood and accepted that there is only one faith, that being the Church, which Church is it? That is the discussion we had over the past few weeks. The other option is, if it is understood to be talking about the tenants and credos, is it the Bible, or some other revelation? There is only one baptism. This is really problematic for those who refuse the truth. Is it sprinkling? Is it pouring? Is it for babies, small children, who is to be baptized? Is it the outward sign of an inward faith? Maybe it is only to establish ones membership in a church? To what extent will someone go to protect their understanding of what Paul is saying, arguments, debates, tearing pages out of their Bibles, rewriting versions to reflect their own agendas, or establishing latter day revelations to support their error.

Demetrius caused an uproar over Paul's teaching to protect his way of life. People today seek to change or ignore the Word to protect the path that they have chosen.

What are we as Christians willing to do to stand for the truth? Are we willing to lose friends or family because of the stand that we have taken for God? Are we willing to seek different employment because our jobs are not conducive to being a faithful Christian? Are we willing to be like those two teenagers who stood in the back of the balcony to sing Stand Up for Jesus? Are we willing to step out of our comfort zones to take God to others?

Are we willing to give our lives to God through faith and obedience in the watery grave of baptism to secure our salvation?

Are we willing to, like Joshua...