

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

WITH SIN COMES DECLINE

Roelf L. Ruffner

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4 NKJV).

As I read the Bible, it amazes me how much time God gave the people in Bible history to repent of their sins and reform their lives according to His will. As the apostle Peter declared, **“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Pet. 3:9). Yet, the Bible also teaches that when a society of people departs from God’s moral standards, they decline morally, spiritually, socially, and politically. Thus, eventually God brings them into judgment.

THE ANTEDILUVIAN WORLD

The world before the Flood was a beautiful place (Gen. 1:31), but it was desecrated by sin and death. The first sin was the sin of Adam and Eve, but their descendants continued the devolution of humanity. For example, a descendant of Cain, Lamech, was a polygamist and a murderer, like his ancestor Cain (Gen. 4:23). Over the centuries, the digression of sin accelerated affecting the descendants of righteous Seth. They (Not the spirit beings called *angels*—Mat. 22:30) intermarried with the **“daughters of men,”** out of lust rather than love, producing offspring that became immoral and violent (Gen. 6:1-4,11). God looked upon this with sorrow and righteous indignation (Gen. 6:5,6). God’s patience is not eternal. Thus, there came a time when **“God said to Noah,**

The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen. 6:13). In essence, God **“gave them up”** to punishment (Rom. 1:24).

Here we see the pattern of God’s dealing with a society of people that leave His moral precepts:

1. He allows them time to repent (Acts 17:30). He gave Adam’s descendants 120 years (Gen. 6:30).
2. He warns them through His Word of the consequences of their sins through the ancient prophets (seers), and in the Christians age, the faithful church and particularly faithful Gospel preachers.
3. As men forget God and His Word they decline further into depravity and rebelliousness (Rom. 1:18-32).
4. Without the moral standards of God to follow (and often in spite of them) societies become more and more violent.
5. Eventually, the judgment of God comes upon them.

THE CANAANITES

The Canaanites of the Old Testament were a mixture of seven different nations or peoples (Acts 13:19). By the time of Abraham, their societies had been corrupted by idolatry and immorality. But God gave them time to repent. As He promised Abraham, **“Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete”** (Gen. 15:15,16). When Abraham’s descendants return, four hundred and fifty years later, to claim their inheritance, the people of the land were beyond redemption. **“Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these**

IN THIS ISSUE.....

WITH SIN COMES DECLINE—ROELF L. RUFFNER	1
EDITORIAL—CIVIL GOVERNMENT.....	2
ENEMIES OF THE WORD OF GOD—BRUCE STULTING.....	7

Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher
dpbcftf@gmail.com

COMMUNICATIONS received by *CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH* and/or its Editor are viewed as intended FOR PUBLICATION unless otherwise stated. Whereas we respect confidential information, so described, everything else sent to us we are free to publish without further permission being necessary. Anything sent to us NOT for publication, please indicate this clearly when you write. Please address such letters directly to the Editor David P. Brown, P.O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383 or dpbcftf@gmail.com. Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE

To receive *CFTF* free, go to www.cftfpaper.com and sign up. Once done, you will be notified when the current issue is available. It will be in the form of a PDF document that can be printed, and forwarded to friends.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR THE PAPER EDITION

Single Print Subs: One Year, \$25.00; Two Years, \$45.00.

NO REFUNDS FOR CANCELLATIONS OF PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS.

ADVERTISING POLICY & RATES

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH exists to defend the gospel (Philippians 1:7,17) and refute error (Jude 3). Therefore, we advertise only what is authorized by the Bible (Colossians 3:17). We will not knowingly advertise anything to the contrary and reserve the right to refuse any advertisement.

All setups and layouts of advertisements will be done by *CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH*. A one-time setup and layout fee for each advertisement will be charged if such setup or layout is needful. Setup and layout fees are in addition to the cost of the space purchased for advertisement. No major changes will be made without customer approval.

All advertisements must be in our hands no later than one month preceding the publishing of the issue of the journal in which you desire your advertisement to appear. To avoid being charged for the following month, ads must be canceled by the first of the month. We appreciate your understanding of and cooperation with our advertising policy.

MAIL ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADVERTISEMENTS, AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357. COST OF SPACE FOR ADS: Back page, \$300.00; full page, \$300.00; half page, \$175.00; quarter page, \$90.00; less than quarter page, \$18.00 per column-inch. CLASSIFIED ADS: \$2.00 per line per month. SETUP AND LAYOUT FEES: Full page, \$50.00; half page, \$35.00; anything under a half page, \$20.00.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH is published bimonthly. P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357 Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001

Editorial...

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

INTRODUCTION

In 64 BC, Pompey the Great made Cilicia a Roman province, as well as its capital. Following the death of Pompey in Egypt during the civil war, Tarsus received great benefits both from Julius Caesar and then from the first Emperor of the Roman Empire, Augustus. Therefore, he who became the peerless apostle Paul was born into Roman citizenship in the free city of Tarsus, Cilicia (Acts 21:39; 22:28). Incidentally, a free city was one that had the privilege of having its own magistrates to govern it. Also, it was exempted from the occupation of a Roman garrison. However, being a free city did not guarantee its citizens Roman citizenship. Moreover, during this period in the Roman Empire only from 5 to 10% of the people composing it enjoyed Roman citizenship. Roman citizens had freedom from beatings without trial, the right to be tried before the emperor rather than a local court of law, and the right not to be executed by crucifixion.

Although Paul was born into Roman citizenship, there is no information available regarding how Paul's father became a Roman citizen. He may have been granted citizenship or it came down to him as an individual right. More than likely his citizenship was a reward for services rendered to the right people, possibly during the civil wars. The foregoing speculation is offered only because we know from Roman history the foregoing are the paths others traveled to become Roman citizens. Be those things as they may, it seems safe to conclude that years later when the Roman chief captain who bought his Roman citizenship with "a great sum" was, to say the least, surprised when Paul said to him concerning his own citizenship, "But I was free born." Incidentally, from this account we learn at that time one could buy Roman citizenship, but it cost a "great sum" to purchase it. Further, the significant change in attitude and action by the chief captain and those Romans involved with Paul after they understood the apostle was a Roman citizen should be noted—more about that later in this piece. Especially in Paul's case, notice the preparation and intense effort made to protect Paul from the Jews when the chief captain had learned of the plot to kill Paul (Acts 23:17-33). Such activity further demonstrates the privilege of having Roman citizenship.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

When Paul wrote, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace" (Gal. 1:15), he revealed God's providential preparation for him to serve as an apostle of Christ to the Gentiles. Paul was brought up as a devout Jew in Tarsus and educated in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Being a Hellenistic Jew (a Jew reared outside of Judea/Galilee), the

apostle was knowledgeable of Greek culture, philosophy, and way of thinking. Thus, with the privileges of Roman citizenship, Paul was well prepared to expedite the work whereunto the Lord had called him—testifying that Jesus is the Christ as well as preaching and defending the gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. At the time of Paul’s conversion, Jesus said of him, **“for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”** (Acts 9:15b, 16).

This is an appropriate place to emphasize an important point about Paul’s attitude toward and use of all things pertaining to this world in his faithful service to God, including his Roman citizenship. He viewed and used them as expedients (advantageous aids) in protecting his person and in discharging his obligations to the Lord as an apostle of Christ. Again, I refer to the two examples of the foregoing: when he used his Roman citizenship to escape flogging and to appeal for a hearing before Caesar (Acts 22:25-27; 25:10–11). We may accurately conclude that when the situation demanded it, the apostle would have acted accordingly. What an example to follow for all New Testament Christians when it comes to our attachment to, involvement with, and use of matters, things, and persons in faithfully serving the Lord during our probationary state on earth (See Mat. 6:33; Col. 3:17)!

THE CHRISTIAN AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Understanding the value of Paul’s Roman citizenship to him in his personal work for the Lord, we turn now to Paul’s inspired teaching about civil government and the Christian’s relationship to it. Romans 13:1-7 stands out as a clear and succinct declaration of the Lord’s will pertaining to the same. (I use the term *Christian* as it is defined and used in the New Testament and not in any sectarian, denominational, or any other sense differing from its use in the Bible.) Briefly, in this text Paul reveals that God ordained civil government to maintain order in society. It is to punish evil doers and protect the innocent. The apostle taught Christians to submit to legitimate civil governmental authority. It should be emphasized that Christians obey the laws of the land, not because they fear being punished for disobeying them, but to obey them is the right thing to do—as God in His Word defines what is right (Mat. 28:18; John 12:48; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Col. 3:17). This is the same reason Christians support civil government in all its legitimate functions by paying taxes, upholding civil governmental authority for the reason God appointed it to operate and in the realm where He ordained it to function (See Mat. 22:21b).

In 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Paul wrote to Timothy teaching that Christians are to pray for government officials to the end that the church be left in peace and free from civil government persecution—quoting the apostle, **“that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life.”** How serious was Paul about

Christians submitting to the lawful authority of civil government? The answer is understood in Luke’s quotation of Paul’s words found in Acts 25:11a. If Paul were found guilty of a crime, the apostle said, **“For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die.”** From his remark, as well as his brief but succinct treatise on the same in Romans 13, we learn that Paul in principle supported the death penalty.

Of a Christian’s obligation to obey civil law the apostle Peter wrote:

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king (1 Pet. 13-17).

The only case wherein it is a godly act for Christians to disobey civil government is this: when it institutes a law that in order for one to comply with it, one necessarily sins against God (1 John 3:4; Jam. 4:18). In such cases, we must follow the apostle Peter and the other apostles. When the Jewish council had ordered the apostles to cease preaching the gospel, they replied to the council with the declaration, **“We ought to obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29). And this they did.

Regarding the work of Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 16:16-40), Paul cast a demon out of a slave girl who was engaged in fortune-telling. Her owners accused both Paul and Silas of criminal activity for so doing. This is the case because in casting out the demon, Paul and Silas indirectly interfered with the money making scheme of her owners. Having fomented what we may accurately label a “lynch mob,” Paul and Silas were severely beaten under the auspices of the mob to accommodate the city leaders. Subsequently, they were confined to the inner prison and put into the stocks. Of course, the outcome of this ordeal was the conversion of the Philippian jailor and his house. (Many church members do not realize what may be required of us when in song we say to the Lord and our brethren, “Lead me to some soul today.”) In this case, when Paul had the opportunity to use his rights as a Roman citizen he did not hesitate to do so.

Thinking, no doubt, that Paul and Silas had “learned their lesson,” the magistrates of the Philippi sent orders for them to be released. But, to their surprise these abused men refused their release until these same magistrates spoke to them personally. Paul did not hesitate to send a straight forward, frank, and candid message back to them. About the magistrates and to them, Paul declared, **“They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily?”**

may verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out” (Acts 16:35). To say the least, the magistrates were struck with fear having learned they had violated the sacred civil rights of two Roman citizens. This was an action which could have brought on the rulers severe personal penalties, even execution. Profound apologies were made to Paul and Silas and they were asked to quietly depart from the city.

Also referenced previously, another good example of the respect of Roman authorities for the rights of Roman citizens is seen following Paul’s rescue by the Roman soldiers from the enraged Jews in Jerusalem. It was common to interrogate by scourging a prisoner to get information from him. Paul was about to undergo such interrogation when he asked, **“the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman”** (Acts 22:25-29). The centurion in charge was afraid when he learned that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him, thereby violating Paul’s civil rights.

From these two New Testament cases alone, it is clear that Paul insisted vigorously that his civil rights as a Roman citizen be respected and not violated as he went about his work for the Lord. From Paul’s example and teaching, we learn more about the apostle’s inspired view of the Christian’s use of civil government, the Christian’s relationship to and one’s use of it in living the Christian life. The apostle of Christ objected to civil government usurpations and violations of his legal rights as a Roman citizen in his work for the Lord. Thus, Christians who are citizens of the United States have New Testament authority to think and act the same as did Paul regarding our rights under the U. S. Constitution as we labor to do God’s work.

The First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution and the first of what is known as *The Bill of Rights* reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

As is the case with the whole U. S. Constitution, the First Amendment applies to Christian citizens as well as any other American Citizen. The U. S. Constitution not only sets up the United States government, but forbids the congress from making laws “respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press,” etc. Paul never knew nor had the civil rights that Christians have under the U. S. Constitution. But in view of what he did regarding his civil rights as a Roman citizen in spreading and defending the gospel, if living today, he would have used every component part of the U. S. Constitution to expedite his work for the Lord and

protect himself in doing so.

THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE CHRISTIAN

The rights the apostle Paul enjoyed because of his Roman citizenship were for his day great, but are not to be compared with the overall liberty and protection of individual rights that a citizen of the United States of America has under the U. S. Constitution—including Christians. Thus, when Christian citizens in the United States are respectful and compliant with the New Testament’s inspired teaching regarding civil government, they are acting in concert with the authority of the U. S. Constitution—the document that brought into existence and sustains the federal government of the United States of America and from which all the laws of the land are to conform. The preamble to the U. S. Constitution reads:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

The first 10 amendments (The Bill of Rights) to the U.S. Constitution were designed to protect the basic rights of U.S. citizens, guaranteeing the freedom of speech, press, assembly, and exercise of religion; the right to fair legal procedure and to bear arms; and that powers not delegated to the federal government were reserved for the states and the people. Christians in the United States have the constitutional authority to teach and defend the gospel as a whole and all component parts thereof it. The same is the case regarding Biblical moral law. We ought to follow the faithful peerless apostle Paul in doing as he did. To Timothy and through the young preacher to all Christians till the end of time he wrote:

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me (2 Tim. 3:10, 11).

Would not Paul’s foregoing inspired instruction to Timothy include the cases wherein Paul exercised his Roman Citizenship rights as a Christian to deliver himself from civil injustices as he went about doing the work the Lord called him to do? If not, why not?

CHRISTIANS FACING EVIL IN HIGH PLACES IN THE U. S. TODAY

Regarding the attitude of many in the United States today toward the authority of civil government, certain governors and mayors have refused to act in concert with what the inspired Paul wrote concerning the design and purpose of civil government—to protect good people and punish bad people. Further, in recent days some office holders at all levels of civil government have refused to condemn anarchists,

other terrorists, and criminals who openly advocate the overthrow of the constitutional civil government of America's founding fathers, Further, they do not care who they hurt or abuse to attain their goals—the overthrow by whatever means of the civil government the founding fathers of these United States gave us. In their states and cities, evil doers have rioted, looted, burned, and murdered with little to no fear of suffering the consequences due such criminals. Law and order they know not.

YOUR VOTE IN THE 2020 GENERAL ELECTION

Besides living daily as the New Testament teaches Christians to live in all of our associations, what else can Christians do to oppose the wicked? You can vote for the candidate(s) who offers the best hope for keeping this country on the track the founding fathers put it on. Of course, many have voted early in the 2020 election. If that is the case with you, these words cannot influence you in this election. However, for those who have not voted, maybe these last minute words will help you in determining for whom you will vote.

Since we are electing the Chief Executive Officer of the federal government, how will you decide the candidate for whom you will vote? It should **not** solely be based on a candidate's rhetoric, tone, style, looks, or likability. As someone said, ***"This is not a junior high or high school popularity/personality contest. I'm not voting for the person—I'm voting for the platform!"*** That being the case, in determining for whom you will vote please take notice of the following list containing some of things for which a Christian citizen can and ought to vote as well as some things Christians should oppose. Some of the things listed came from an unknown author. With what I have previously written in mind please consider the following.

Among other important matters, Christians are voting for:

- 1) The principles on which this country was built and whereon it stands.
- 2) Constitutional government.
- 3) The freedom to worship and teach the Bible.
- 4) Our children and grandchildren to be able to choose their own path in life.
- 5) All parents to be able to choose where their children are educated.
- 6) The Electoral College to remain in place, so that a few heavily populated liberal centers do not control the elections.
- 7) Federal judges and a Supreme Court that interpret the Constitution rather than rewrite it.
- 8) History to be taught, with all of its warts, without erasing it or revising it—we must learn from our history lest we repeat it!
- 9) Capitalism and the right of private enterprise.
- 10) The right of the Civil Government to have a military that can protect this constitutional republic and the rights of the

citizens thereof.

- 11) Those who know that no one has the right to be wrong.
- 12) Those who know that all persons must take responsibility for their actions.
- 13) Those who will punish evil doers and protect the innocent.
- 14) Those who believe in absolute objective truth.

Among those things for which Christians ought to vote against are:

- 1) Those who support and uphold the murder of unborn babies by "legalized" abortion—they do not believe in the sanctity of life .
- 2) Those who **"call evil good and good evil"** (Isa. 5:20)
- 3) Those striving to legalize alcohol, gambling, pornography, marijuana, prostitution, transgenderism, bestiality, same sex marriage, pedophilia, and such like.
- 3) Open borders. No nation will survive when it allows anyone to cross its borders without knowing about them. The Lord has certain requirements for those who would become citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Those who refuse to meet those requirements cannot become citizens of God's kingdom.
- 4) A rampant welfare system that enslaves its recipients (2 The. 3:10).
- 5) Socialism, in all of its forms, including health care, redistribution of wealth, reparations, etc.

No one can honestly say he/she loves God, and vote for a candidate who defends and supports the murdering of God's most precious blessing to society—the unborn. Please consider how immoral the U. S. has become. Remember, ***"a vote is not a valentine. You are not confessing your love for the candidate. It is a chess move for the world you desire to live in."***

Ultimately and finally, we know that the only thing that can make any people the kind of people God desires them to be, and they must be if heaven is to be their eternal home, is their belief and obedience to the gospel of Christ. But until that happens, God's children must continue to live Godly lives, preach, and defend the whole counsel of God. This includes using what God in His great providence has placed into our hands to do the best we can in helping create an environment that will be more open to the truth of God's saving Word in all things. Indeed, God has given us the whole teaching of the New Testament and the personal conduct of the apostle Paul as a great example for us to follow in using one's civil rights in spreading and defending the gospel. Will you as a Christian, but also as one of "We the people," exercise your civil right to cast your vote for the platform policy that helps keep you free by, at least, *protecting the basic rights of U.S. citizens, guaranteeing the freedom of speech, press, assembly, and exercise of religion; the right to fair legal procedure and to bear arms; and that powers not delegated to the federal government were reserved for the states and the people* (Col. 3:17)?

(Continued From Page 1)

the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore, I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants” (Lev. 18:24,25). The Canaanites had almost completed that digressive cycle of sin: rebellion against God by idolatry, its attendant sin of immorality, violence, further decline, and God’s judgment.

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

When the Israelites conquered the promised land, God warned them not to enter the cycle of sin like the Canaanites.

When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise. You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods” (Deu. 12:29-31).

When the nation of Israel failed to heed the command of the Lord, following the death of Joshua and his successors, they declined spiritually and morally.

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger (Jos. 2:11-12).

The Lord allowed pagan nations to chasten them until, in desperation, they repented of their sins and turned back to God. Then He sent judges who led them to victory over their enemies and faithfulness. Yet Israel, like modern day unfaithful Christians, always returned to their old ways of unfaithfulness and the cycle resumed. **“But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit, and, a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire”** (2 Pet. 2:22).

SONS OF DAVID/SONS OF JEROBOAM

The tragic history of David’s kingdom is recorded in the books of 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings. From Solomon on to Zedekiah, the Davidic line reflected the spiritual decline of ancient Israel and its eventual judgment by God. Some kings were righteous, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, but most were wicked or lukewarm. They followed the same digressive pattern, rebellion against God by idolatry and its attendant sin of immorality, violence, further decline, and God’s judgment. Towards the end there were palace coups in which a ruler was assassinated to be replaced by his son.

And the Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them

by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy (2 Chr. 36:15-16).

Their society was now worse than the Canaanites whom they had replaced over eight hundred years before (cf. 2 Kings 21:11). God destroyed David’s kingdom, and the people would go into Babylonian Captivity for seventy years (Jer. 25:11).

Because of Solomon’s idolatry, Jeroboam’s kingdom was established when ten of the twelve tribes of Israel broke away from the House of David and formed the northern kingdom of Israel or Samaria. It quickly descended into idolatry and oppression. Dynasties would last for a generation or two and then be violently overthrown by a usurper from the military. As the kingdom digressed, more into paganism the political upheaval and foreign intrigue became pronounced. Finally, the Assyrian army took the capitol of Samaria and many of the people went into captivity.

Nevertheless, they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them (2 Kin. 17:14,15).

THE NEW TESTAMENT GENTILE WORLD

Those people not under the Mosaic Covenant (the Gentiles) also followed the same pattern of degradation as did God’s chosen people. Even the literate, pagan societies of ancient Greece and Rome once had a sense of decency and justice. But by the First Century A.D., that had dissolved into immorality, depravity, and politics ruled by brute force. In Paul and the Holy Spirit’s brilliant expose of the pagan world in Romans Chapter One, the Word of God portrays the frustration of God and His legal wrath in one phrase: **“Therefore God also gave them up...”** (Rom. 1:24). Since they ignored the reality of God, He gave them up to degradation and eventual judgment. **“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness...”** (Rom. 1:28-29).

The glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ brought freedom to the ancient world (Mark 16:15, 16; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). To begin with, the heathen had their sins, which were many, washed away by the blood of Christ.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor

revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

They were given a new way of living—one free from the bondage and guilt of sin. As the apostle Paul wrote:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:8-10).

PRESENTLY

American society is in the process of declining at a fast pace. For almost two generations, our culture has been bombarded with rebellion and hedonism. The same digressive cycle is presently at work and has been for many years—rebellion against God, false religions, humanism, atheism, secularism, the acceptance of every kind of immorality as normal—violence—further decline—God’s judgment. Have you noticed the increase of violence, especially political violence, in our land? Riots and physical attacks on those with whom they disagree. The two hundred and twenty-year old Democratic Party has become the militant political party opposed to the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and anyone who believes in Christ as the only Savior of man from sin. It is pro-death (abortion)—murder of the unborn. It promotes immorality of every description as it seeks to suppress of Biblical morality. Neither party mentions anything about the abomination of same-sex marriage. It is accepted by both sides and is the new “normal.” **“...who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (Rom. 1:32).**

As in the days of the first century church, we need to spread the leaven of Truth (John 8:32; Mat. 13:33) in our nation. We may soon be denied the airwaves or the internet to

do this, but we can still obey the Lord by the oldest method known—preaching the gospel one on one (Acts 8:4). It must be challenging preaching, dealing plainly with religious and moral sins along with the eternal consequences of leaving this world guilty of sin. We need to preach as did John, the forerunner of the Christ. Of his work it is written:

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight (Luke 3:3,4).

Let us also remember the admonition of Paul to the young preacher Timothy when the apostle wrote:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-5, *KJV*)

My God grant our nation more time to repent. Also, that His church will truly have the love of God and lost souls in their lives as well as keeping its ranks pure. Further, that Christians, especially elders and Gospel preachers, will have the courage of their convictions to live the Christian life and preach the whole council of God regardless of the sacrifices they must make in being faithful to the Lord (Jude 3). May we use that time to live the Christian life regardless of the situations and circumstances that try our faith in God, Christ, and all things righteous as we live out our days on this earth!

—2500 Moore Court
Columbia, TN 38401



Enemies of the Word of God

Bruce Stulting

The preacher spoke the truth when he said, **“of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Ecc. 12:12).** From the beginning of the written word, millions of books have been penned. From time to time, a book comes along that receives such wide acceptance that it becomes the definitive work in a given field or subject. Other books are opposed and rejected by many for various reasons. Yet, of all the books ever written,

none has had so many enemies as the Bible. Many dynamic, learned, and influential men have openly declared that they would destroy this Book of books. Diocletian, Roman Emperor (A.D. 284-305), burned Bibles and erected a monument stating: “Extinct is the name of Christian.” The Roman Empire lay in ruins, yet Christianity continues today. Thomas Paine (1737-1809) made the statement, “Five years from now there will not be a Bible in America.” Yet, the Bible re-

mains at the top of the best seller list. Voltaire (1694-1778), a French skeptic, said, "Within 100 years the Bible will be a forgotten book." Voltaire's own writing sits forgotten on the shelf and the Bible continues to grow in popularity. The Bible remains the most read, the most translated, and most influential book ever written.

Surely, those who wage open warfare against the Word will soon be exposed. Truly, "**The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God**" (Psa. 14:1). However, there are many, who are enemies of the Word, who are not so obvious. Jesus likened them to ravening wolves in sheep's clothing (Mat. 7:15). These enemies are the most dangerous kind. They will profess to be followers of God and believers in Christ. Having gained the trust of the unwary, they will be able to beguile many who will be blinded to their cunning, treacherous attacks aimed at the authority of God's Word. Their attack will never be open and direct! It will come with subtlety and deceit, even as was used by their father, Satan, in the Garden of Eden (John 8:44). It is by such underhanded and cunning means that Satan beguiles the hearts of the simple, and weakens the faith of all! We must be set for the defense of the Gospel (Phi. 1:17).

Those who promise continuous revelation downgrade that which God has revealed in His Word, and minimize its completeness. Such are the enemy of the Bible. We are told that the Scriptures thoroughly furnish us unto all good works and contain all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Anyone relying on conferences, synods, or councils to update and modernize God's Word arrays himself against the Bible's completeness and authority,

and thus becomes its enemy. The priest, who advises men that they must have his interpretation to understand the revealed Will of God, demeans the Scriptures and becomes an enemy of the Bible. Jesus stated, "**Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**" (John 8:32). He did not say, "Ye shall know someone's interpretation of the truth." The Bereans were considered noble because they searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). The preacher who persuades men to seek salvation on any other terms than those set forth in the Gospel, belittles the Word and is an enemy of the Bible! The modernist attacks the Holy Writ by trying to rationalize away the plain record of signs, wonders, and miracles recorded within its pages. The man who professes to believe, and does not live it, is also condemned!

Man has made progress by making improvements in industry, transportation, communication, et al. However, man cannot improve on God's perfect, inspired Will. We must never seek to add to, detract from, or substitute anything in God's Word. Paul sternly warns, "**But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed**" (Gal. 1:8). Man will never prosper by trying to change God's Word. I cannot think of a more fitting verse with which to close this article than Acts 20:32: "**And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.**"

—375 Hickory Hill
Oakhurst, TX 77359