

Ministers:
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley
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Sunday:
8:00 AM: WGCY
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:
7:00 PM: Bible Study

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This Past Week:
Worship—
Wednesday—15
Contribution—\$650

For meditation:
Proverbs 29.22–24
What threat does
our spiritual nature
face when we
partner with an
unscrupulous indi-
vidual—in busi-
ness, in recreation,
in marriage, etc.?

Radio program:
WGCY FM, 106.3
Sundays at 8 AM

What is an opinion?

There are some who think everything is a matter of opinion, including statements such as $2 + 2 = 5$ and “George Washington was our first president.” It’s hard to take such skeptics seriously, and the reality is that no one can live on Skeptic Street for very long. Absolute certainties and genuine knowledge exist in this world and living life well involves recognizing and accepting them when we discover them.

But there are *opinions*. As I defined the term in the last article, an opinion is something we believe that others need not share. Opinions (1) involve possibilities or probabilities, not certainties; (2) may be wrong; (3) are conclusions about which reasonable men may differ. The equation $2 + 2 = 5$ falls into the category of certainty, because our understanding forces us to think of it that way. But some propositions do not compel us to think of them alike. I think everyone should be a Cubs fan, but nothing forces me to this conclusion; I simply choose to believe it (the same goes for the Bears). Opinions aren’t all created equal; the value of an opinion increases as it corresponds to facts and reality. New information about Richard III, the Iwo Jima flag-raisers, the Kennedy assassination, etc., has caused people to rethink what has been historically believe about these matters.

Christianity involves certainties and opinions. R. L. Whiteside wrote that “Genuine faith is based on evidence that admits of no doubt” (*Doctrinal Discourses*, 101). But he also wrote, “Read Rom. 14 and you will see that ‘faith’ means there about the same as the word ‘opinion.’” The existence of God and the resurrection of Christ are certainties, but many things in our religion and life are based on opinions. Next week, I’ll try to offer some guidelines for forming opinions.

kenny

Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL

Times That Try Men’s Souls, 2

It’s sometimes said that the most important thing you can do for a man is not always the first thing to do for him. Let’s assume a mob hit man falls in the water and is drowning. The most important thing you can do for him is to teach him the gospel, but before you can teach him the gospel you must pull him out of the water. Only after you’ve saved him from drowning can you teach him to the gospel for the saving of his soul.

Humanity, it is said, is drowning in poverty, injustice, oppression, etc.. Humanity needs to hear the gospel, but the first thing it needs is to be delivered from the temporal disadvantages it faces. Thus, the church needs to feed, clothe, doctor, educate, etc. the down-and-out before it tries to teach them the gospel. After all, the world doesn’t care how much we know until it knows how much we care.

The analogy may seem analogous, but it isn’t. A man can be drowning in water through no fault of his own, but if a man is drowning politically, economically, or socially, etc., it’s due to evil that resides in the soul of man. And any problem that results from sin can only be truly resolved when sin is dealt with in a godly way.

Tangible problems can have spiritual causes. And to think we can solve a tangible problem without first dealing with the spiritual cause(s) behind the problem is just wrong. Some things cannot be fixed until men are right with God.

kenny

Sermon: 2 Peter 2.10–22

Brute beasts

31 March 2024

Ordinary evil

In 1992, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* was published. It is an unsettling insight into human behavior, for it details how a unit of average, middle-aged Germans (from Stuttgart, GE) became the cold-blooded murderers of tens of thousands of Jews in Poland. It's hard to put these men in the same category as the Nazi hierarchy, but what they did—just following orders—was unconscionable. There's no evil of which ordinary men aren't capable.

Reserve Police Battalion 101 is how I think of the soldiers who abused Christ. Maybe they're not to be lumped with Judas, Pilate, or Caiaphas, but their evil, in some ways, is more disturbing than those who played a more public role in Christ's death.

EVIL WILL OUT

The soldiers had no reason for abusing Christ. When they took charge of an innocent man who had been scourged, they might have been sympathetic and kindly. I was once detained by the Athens, Greece, police, and they couldn't have been nicer; they would have put an Eagle Scout to shame. But the Roman soldiers, trained to be brutal, could not be otherwise (2 Pet. 2.14). Sin is malevolent and it will come out; one malevolent victim can treat another victim horrendously (e.g., Jewish capos).

EVIL PAYS

Judas sold himself for thirty pieces of silver; the soldiers hired themselves out to Caesar. They were the minions of others, doing what they were paid to do. Evil men can be heartless tyrants to those beneath them, and fawning sycophants to those above them (Matt. 18.21–35). If men will torture the Son of God for money, should we ever be surprised at what else they'll do for money?

EVIL LAUGHS

Ridicule is from a Lat. word that means to excite laughter. To the evil, godliness is a joke (Job 12.4). In ridicule Jesus, they put a purple (the royal hue) robe on Christ; in ridicule; they wove thorns into a crown that they placed on Him to further wound and insult Him; in ridicule, they put a reed in His hand then used it to beat Him on the head; in ridicule, they spit on Him, then bowed before Him in mock worship; in ridicule, they cried "Hail, king of the Jews."

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn" (Ps. 22.7). In their ridicule they bowed, but it was the devil they worshipped.

kenny

Josephus's testimony to the flood

"When God gave the signal, and it began to rain, the water poured down forty entire days, till it became fifteen cubits higher than the earth; which was the reason why there was no greater number preserved, since they had no place to fly to. When the rain ceased, the water did but just begin to abate after one hundred and fifty days, [that is, on the seventeenth day of the seventh month,] it then ceasing to subside for a little while. After this, the ark rested on the top of a certain mountain in Armenia; which, when Noah understood, he opened it; and seeing a small piece of land about it, he continued quiet, and conceived some cheerful hopes of deliverance. But a few days afterward, when the water was decreased to a greater degree, he sent out a raven, as desirous to learn whether any other part of the earth were left dry by the water, and whether he might go out of the ark with safety; but the raven, finding all the land still overflowed, returned to Noah again. And after seven days he sent out a dove, to know the state of the ground; which came back to him covered with mud, and bringing an olive branch: hereby Noah learned that the earth was become clear of the flood. So after he had staid seven more days, he sent the living creatures out of the ark; and both he and his family went out, when he also sacrificed to God, and feasted with his companions. However, the Armenians call this place, The Place of Descent; for the ark being saved in that place, its remains are shown there by the inhabitants to this day.

"Now all the writers of barbarian histories make mention of this flood, and of this ark . . . Nicolaus of Damascus, in his ninety-sixth book, hath a particular relation about them; where he speaks thus: 'There is a great mountain in Armenia, over Minyas, called Baris, upon which it is reported that remains of the timber many who fled at the time of the Deluge were saved; and that one who was carried in an ark came on shore upon the top of it; and that they were a great while preserved. This might be the man about whom Moses the legislator of the Jews wrote'" (*Antiquities of the Jews* I.3.5–6).

"[T]he country called Carra; it was a soil that bare amomum in great plenty: there are also in it the remains of that ark, wherein it is related that Noah escaped the deluge, and where they are still shown to such as are desirous to see them" (*Antiquities of the Jews* XX.2.2).