

January, 2008

Pause Ponder Profit

Authority—Our Need For It

by James A. Brown

Webster defines authority as “the right to govern, control, or command.” Man cannot reject the necessity for this in every activity of his life; the home, the school, the community and the military. Disorder and chaos would reign without some standard of authority to enforce discipline and empower others to act. If man cannot deny the importance of authority in the physical realm, why should he oppose the great need for it in the spiritual realm? Yet, many in the world refuse to see the need for divine authority in religious matters.

This is perhaps the root cause of much of the religious confusion and division today. The statement that is generally made, “It doesn’t make any difference what you believe as long as you’re sincere,” shows the denial of divine authority. For if many believed they needed divine authority for all they taught and practiced, it would make a difference what one believes.

God commands that we all “speak the same thing” (1 Cor. 1:10) and that “we all walk by the same rule” (Phil. 3:16). The apostle Paul implies in these verses that

God intends for man to recognize and respect a single standard of authority in religious matters. Jesus, as well as the religious leaders of His day, taught this same truth. Consider Matthew 21:23-27. *“Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?’ But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus and said, ‘We do not know.’ And He said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”*

From this section of text, we see that the chief priests and elders recognized two things. First, that authority is necessary. If not they would not have ask it of Jesus. Second, that authority must come from a proper source. Jesus upheld their belief in the need for authority by asking the same from them. But more, He pointed out that there are only two sources of authority in religious matters — heaven or man. The things which men believe, teach and practice in the name of religion either come from God or man. Jesus says if it comes from man it is vain worship (Matt. 15:9).

Yes, the word of God demands authority for our beliefs, teachings and practices concerning religion. If I am ask why I believe a certain thing, why I teach a certain thing, or why the church I attend practices a certain thing, I will give Bible authority — book, chapter and verse. Will you?



Unfaithful Brethren

by James A. Brown

Unfaithfulness is as ancient as Israel (1 Cor. 10:1-12) and yet a current and common problem. According to Paul, Christians have a moral duty to restore those “overtaken in any trespass” (Gal. 6:1). And in the Book of James and in chapter five and verses nineteen and twenty, James said, *“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”*

Several conclusions may be drawn from this text. First the text implies that a Christian can wander from the truth. Many in the religious world deny this. The old doctrine of “the impossibility of apostasy” is still being taught and believed. The statement of faith for the churches belonging to the Southern Baptist Convention states, *“Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end.”* (The Baptist Faith And Message, Par. V.). There are just too many warnings in the Bible for anyone to go along with the idea that one cannot fall from God’s grace (1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 5:4; Heb. 3:12, 4:1, 12:15). Common sense tells us that these warnings would not have been given if it’s impossible for a Christian to be lost.

The text also implies that “the truth” can be known. Logic tells us that one cannot err, wander, roam, or go astray from the truth if he has never known the truth. “The truth” is God’s word (Jn. 17:17; James 1:18). Jesus emphasized the fact that a knowledge of this truth will set one free from his sins (Jn. 8:32). “The truth” is that body of factual information concerning God and the execution of his purposes through Christ and the duties of man which must and can be known. This truth is

opposed to the corrupt opinions, superstitions, inventions, and percepts of men (2 Tim. 2:1-4). We must love the truth (2 Thess. 2:10), obey the truth (Gal. 5:7), and display the truth in our daily lives (2 Cor. 4:1-2). It is the truth that purifies the soul (1 Pet. 1:22). And there are identifying characteristics of unfaithfulness to it and to God presented all throughout the Bible.

A third thing this text suggest is that the faithful have a responsibility to those who have strayed from the truth. The faithful must remember that the souls of men are worth more than all the world (Matt. 16:26). When my brother or sister in Christ turns away from the truth and the Lord, I have the obligation to try and bring him/her back. In Gal 6:1-2 Paul wrote, *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* Those who have wandered away need to be turned back to Christ (Acts 8:18-24; 1 Jn. 1:6-10), and we have an obligation of love to try and make this happen.

A fourth thing implied in this text is that God will forgive the wandering child of God who returns. Many who have wandered away become discouraged and doubt that God will forgive them but they must remember that God forgives all kind of sinners (Acts 2:23; 26:9-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-11), and He has promised to forgive them too (Acts 8:22; 1 Jn. 1:9; Heb. 8:12). What is the destination of those who depart from the truth and are not brought back? “He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death”. The death spoken of here is spiritual death—being separated from God in this life (Isa. 59:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:6), but especially separated from God throughout eternity if there is no repentance (Rev. 20:15).

My Concerns For Global Warming

by Dan Richardson

We are hearing much these days on the subject of global warming.

Environmentalists warn that because of man's reckless disregard through the release of pollutants, the world is becoming increasingly warmer and we are reaching a peak of global emergency threatening our very existence. Really? Could it possibly be? While I'm no scientist, I am a Bible student, and frankly, I'm not worried about man's ability to destroy the world. Don't get me wrong: I'm not suggesting we not be concerned about pollution. We should be, but my concerns are over all the environmental "hype" about global warming in view of what the Bible teaches.

First, I'm concerned about man's gullibility to believe everything he hears. Global warming is a case in point. For many, if they can put a celebrity's face with a "cause", it must be true. Or, if a seemingly reputable scientist supports the theory, that's good enough for many, despite the fact that there are many scientists who convincingly discredit the "Gorey" (pun intended) details of global warming danger. For example, I just read an article about how the climate in 2007 can be more accurately classified as "global cooling" due to record cold temps being set in many places. The author, David Deming, is a geophysicist, an adjunct scholar with the National Center for Policy Analysis, and associate professor of Arts and Sciences at the University of Oklahoma, concludes that global warming belongs in the category of "pseudo-scientific mumbo jumbo". My point is this — don't be too easily persuaded that something is believable until you've thoroughly investigated the issue.

As a Christian, I have concerns about the general plight of intellectual laziness, especially as it pertains to man's spiritual life. Religious

beliefs, for many, don't originate through a personal investigation of the Bible, God's word, but come as a result of what their parents believed, or what their priest or pastor tells them to believe. The Bible teaches us of the "nobility" of a certain people who, when they heard the apostle Paul preach, "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Note they didn't believe Paul just because he was a well-known apostle / preacher, but understanding the seriousness of the subject at hand (the salvation of their souls), they put the sermon to the test by a diligent search of the Scriptures. When's the last time you did that? If all would follow this Bible example, many would be shocked at how much "religious mumbo jumbo" is believed due to a lack of Bible knowledge.

Second, I'm concerned about man's arrogance in assuming he has a role in global destruction. Man's progress made within the last 100 years is unparalleled; his growing knowledge in so many fields has resulted in vast achievements, many for good. However, instead of turning humble hearts to give God thanksgiving for all these blessings (cf. James 1:17), many instead lifted themselves up in arrogance to take all the credit themselves. This has always been a danger for man in times of prosperity (cf. Deut. 6:10-12). Paul pin-pointed the problem as he described how a society lapses into moral and spiritual depravity. It begins with a disposition of heart to refuse God and exalt self. They did not retain God in their knowledge, they ceased giving Him thanks, and, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22). In light of what God's word says, and global warming advocates show, the assumption that man can wreak the havoc proposed through polluting the ozone, illustrates an exaggerated sense of importance on his part.

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Third, I'm concerned about the many, obsessed with this world, who will not prepare for the true global warming event. In the end, after all is said and done, they who live their lives without God must face Him in Judgment and give an accounting of how they lived (Romans 2:4-6). In their equation of life, they did not figure God in, to acknowledge a Power higher than themselves, nor would they listen to His revealed word of truth, the Bible. If they had, they would have been cognizant of the true global warming event reserved for when Jesus comes again in flaming fire to render vengeance to those who do not know God nor obey the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:6-9). At that time, the world will be destroyed with fire, the very elements melted by fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:7, 12). These things we all need to be concerned about.

Remember Our Gospel Meeting

Speaker: L. A. Stauffer

Sunday, March 2nd

9:45 A.M. 10:45 A.M. & 6:00 P.M.

Mon. — Fri., March 3rd — 7th

7:00 P.M.

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Sunday
Radio 1490 AM 9:00 A.M.
Bible Study 9:45 A.M.
Worship 10:45 A.M.
Worship 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday
Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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