

Later Workers

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Various Letters

April 5, 2024

Leroy Lerwick: Letter of General Concerns, June 2015

Some have asked me what changes I see, in coming back to the US after 7 years away. I have heard of some cases of those who have been professing, mostly 3rd and 4th or even 5th generation of faithful families, who seem to be influenced by the age of tolerance in which we live, and the accepted attitude that there are good people in the churches who are sincere, and perhaps they can be saved also, although they serve God in a way contrary to the scriptures.

Accommodating one's way of life and activities until there is little difference, results in no rejection, no reproach, in being accepted. This undermines our faith, hides the light our life should be for others and if the only remaining difference between them and us is the ministry and meeting in a home, how can we defend our faith? Although it is not something that we have discussed face to face with many, perhaps I can write some thoughts that have been coming to me, that are like a picture.

Yes, a picture, a word picture, one in which I think we can see such people as God sees them, and maybe we can find ourselves in this picture also. Maybe we can see Jesus as He really is, in this picture. Maybe if we can see that, we can see ourselves, and our true condition. Words can express what a camera never can. Sometimes even what we cannot express or communicate when we are face to face. These are words that are born out of the love in our heart for God's people. Paul strongly resisted the influence of other doctrines when he wrote his letters to the churches. Because wickedness abounds the love of many would wax cold.

In the far north, men die of the cold. At first, they are alarmed, shivering in the cold, but as their temperature decreases, they have a sensation of warmth, and an illusion that they are okay, they just need to sleep, and they lay down and die. The enemy of our soul also has words, and mouths to speak them. Words can help our faith, faith comes by hearing the word, but words can also deceive.

Deception... The world began that way. The Prince of this world came talking, in the garden, he talked about what God had said, questioned it with an eloquence that appealed to Eve. "Did God really say you would die? You will not really die." He can lie without lying. True, they were not going to die physically right away, if they partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Physically they would die eventually, even if they did not partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And that did not change; they eventually died according to the genetic code they were created with, which was capable of regenerating their body for a thousand years. But spiritually, they died.

What a thought, that the prince of this world sowed in them with his statement of truth that made them believe a lie! "Now we know something important, that God did not really tell us, thanks to this serpent! We have some special knowledge, that makes us wise, even wiser than God, and we do not have to obey his counsel to not partake of this tree of wisdom. There will be no consequence." They saw that it was good to look upon, satisfied their human appetites, and made them think they were wise! But they died. They died spiritually.

They realized they were naked, they needed to be clothed, but they were now wise, they could take care of that, no problem. They made themselves clothing; they chose the material, chose the style. So is false religion, we need to do something, we need to cover our defects, our nakedness, and we are wise, we can choose how to cover ourselves, what to believe, and they felt very comfortable with each other, this new wisdom produced a human satisfaction, that seemed like peace, and seemed like righteousness, the serpent would have praised them! "You look wonderful, beautiful, etc." They would have felt so good. But they had died.

The peace they experienced is the peace when there is no life. All of their being was at rest. All was wonderful, but then God came. The prince of the world came talking, but God came walking. They heard, and they hid themselves. Suddenly their wonderful provision was of no avail. There was a provision made for them, some innocent animals had to die, and God clothed them with their skins. He did not ask them what style they would want, He just clothed them.

There were consequences, a lifelong struggle between them and the serpent, who would try to hinder their walk with God, but they could bruise his head by walking with God. He will never give up, he may leave us for a season, but he will never give up. There was the curse on the ground, which brought forth weeds, and the sweat of Adam's brow to earn his bread, rather than the provision of the garden. There were the pains of childbirth for Eve. But those two consequences bring blessing when we accept them. When we try to earn our bread without the sweat of our brow, taking advantage of others to enrich ourselves, or seek to avoid the pains and sorrows that come with life, we miss it all.

There are clear parallels to these two consequences. The world is full of ways to make monetary gain from the teachings of Jesus

and the labors of others. There are many multilevel schemes to promote products and ideas. Some of our friends in South America lost a great deal of money in such schemes that promised to double their investment in a short time. They that will be rich without honest labor and providing a needed product or service pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

We have seen many who have great enthusiasm for sharing the gospel as they see it when there is a monetary gain in doing so. In the same manner, considering the consequence for Eve, the world is full of doctrines which are supposed to cost us nothing, no pain, no suffering, no temptations, but only give us a fantasy, like a little girl who has a doll and thinks she is a mother. There is no pain, no work, no sickness, but some great imagination. Just like a doll, that can be left and forgotten, suffers no harm from the neglect, so a "salvation" that is a fantasy that is born out of a belief that all we have to do is believe, and once we are saved we are a child of God and cannot lose our salvation no matter what happens, does not suffer for the lack of effort or care on our part. Very different from the real salvation that can only come when we are born again and God works the likeness of his Son in us as we endure the tests and trials of life, that make us so dependent on Him.

Paul wrote a letter expressing his great love and concern for the Galatians. He marveled that so soon they had given ear to another gospel, not that there is another gospel, but many pervert the gospel. He knew they were listening to those Jewish Christians who wanted to avoid the criticism from their Jewish relatives who reproached them for having fellowship with uncircumcised gentiles. They knew that if they could convince the gentile Christians to keep at least a part of the law of Moses they would escape the cross of being identified with Jesus's doctrine that was not acceptable to most of the Jews. Paul did not say, "As long as you are sincere, there should be no harm in circumcising yourselves, and keeping some of the law, and our relatives will be happy, they will no longer reproach us. God is a loving God and understands us, and He doesn't want us to suffer." No, he did not say that. Had he thought that he would not have written one of his letters!

They had begun to follow the doctrine of Jesus, and as they also faced some persecution, this doctrine appealed to them. "We don't have to die to ourselves, to the world." It sounded good. But it produced a different fruit in their lives. The keeping of the law without faith in Christ only produced human righteousness and a feeling of superiority over the gentiles, since they had some special knowledge the gentiles did not have. It produced a spirit of criticism, towards others. It produced self-confidence, pride, trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others. That was the only fruit it could produce. The only doctrine that could produce the righteousness of Christ was what Jesus taught, ALL of what he taught.

We cannot pick and choose. It is very easy to take a verse and build a doctrine around it, and ignore other verses that have to do with the subject. Only when we take in to account every verse that has to do with a subject, and understand them in a way that does not produce any contradiction, can we be sure that our belief is correct. It is like a puzzle. There are many pieces; some are cut almost the same. We can put a piece where it does not belong, which means the piece that goes there has to be misplaced also. Maybe they almost fit, but they pop out, we press them back in, and continue. We finally get it all together, but the picture is not there, only a confusion of colors. We cannot choose the pieces that are the colors we like, and reject the colors we don't like. We won't see the final picture.

So Paul was very concerned. Why was he so concerned? Because he loved them, he would lay down his life for them. He compared himself to a mother, who had gone through the pains of childbirth, struggling with them as they listened to the word, as they resisted, then accepted, little by little, as God worked into them the needed concepts that can produce life. But they were like a child that had been born, with life, and begins to grow, and becomes like Jesus, but they began to feed on another gospel, not that there is another gospel, but many pervert the gospel, remove the parts that do not appeal, stress and twist the parts that do appeal so they will appeal even more.

And that was destroying the likeness of Christ in them. They were dying spiritually. They thought they were improving, no struggles, less criticism, it all sounded so good. They enjoyed the feeling of security that special knowledge gives, of esteeming themselves for the works they were doing. But they were dying spiritually. Paul said he was willing; willing to go through all the process of the pains of childbirth again, till Christ would be formed in them again. Would a mother, who suffers greatly to give birth to her child, and then the child becomes ill, and dies, would she be thinking, if only I could take him into my womb again, and give him life, even if I had to suffer all the pains of childbirth again, it would be worth it, to bring him to life again? Paul was willing to do that, every true servant of God is willing to do that. Did the Galatians respond to that great cry of love towards them? We do not know. What they were listening to was causing spiritual death in them, and that was bringing a comfortable feeling.

If we have life, spiritual life, we will have an appetite for the milk of the word, we will not be satisfied with what we are, and no more than a growing child is satisfied with his or her stature. A true child of God can learn to be content with what he or she has, in this world, in things material, but will always want to grow, develop, to be more like Christ. If we partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we might be content with what we are, think we are perfect, but will never be content with what we have. Our self-esteem becomes dependent on that, what we do, what we have, being accepted by others, praised by them, and that destroys the childlike spirit that is so necessary if there is going to be a true work of the Spirit in our heart and soul.

Paul makes it so clear also in his letter to the Philippians, "not having his own righteousness which is of the law," he was at one time

proud of that, a Pharisee without spot, blameless, perfect, but when he saw the true righteousness of Christ, his own was as refuse, garbage, to be rejected, after he believed and had walked many years in the ministry, he did not feel he had fully attained, pressing on to the mark, a true sign of new life.

People seek happiness, satisfaction, to feel good about themselves. Some seek it in pleasures, substances, become addicted to it, and we live in an age where there are so many things available. But it is only for a moment, the same level of high becomes mundane and routine, we need something more, and more. There are emotional highs, pep rally type environments, in social circles even business, and in religion, that make people feel good, and in religion it seems to them that they are receiving the Spirit of God. But it is a false sense of happiness, of peace and joy, which only comes when they are in the atmosphere. They are indoctrinated to believe that if they are well, prospering, and among people who appreciate and praise them, that they have the blessing of God.

For those who do achieve these things, it produces a feeling of superiority, and they share with others their wonderful experience of how God has blessed them because they are good. If in life we have what we need, it is because God is good, not us, in sending the rain and the sun over the good and the evil. For those who believe the doctrine of prosperity, but have no success at it, are not blessed with good health, are not blessed with an ability to invest wisely and have success financially, the doctrine produces discouragement, envy towards the successful and even resentment towards God, and the prince of this world is so pleased.

We live in an age when everything is tolerated, even evil and wrong things, life styles, are tolerated. The only thing that is not truly tolerated is the true righteousness and doctrine of Christ, His humility, simplicity, purity, His ministry He established. It may be more tolerated or ignored in the religious world than it once was, but there will still be those who hate it, wish to destroy it, try to discourage those who wish to follow the narrow way, because they know it, perhaps were raised by parents who live it, have rejected it, and cannot tolerate that others can enjoy it. Such become the persecutors.

Every Christian religion was established in the beginning with the concern and purpose to reestablish the true doctrine as it was in the first century. Every one of them thought they had attained to that. True, they corrected many things that were so wrong in the Catholic universal church, but none of them was willing to go back to the true ministry, to preach the gospel without any form of monetary interest. He who preaches for a salary must please those who pay the salary. If not, he loses his position. It is impossible to preach the truth, all of the truth, if we are being paid to do it. He who pays the salary controls the message.

All through the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelations, it is crystal clear that it is God who determines what we should believe, and He does not tolerate us changing His teachings.

There is not one example anywhere in the bible where we can say that men came up with a better idea, and God accepted it. It seems reasonable to our human mind, especially in our age of tolerance, that there must be good people in every religion who are sincere and righteous and are saved. All who promote this doctrine defend it only with human reasoning, nothing from the scriptures.

In our efforts to be accepted, avoid the cross and rejection, of which the scriptures are very clear, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (**2 Timothy 3.12**) and "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised: only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." (**Galatians 6:12**) – we become so much like the naturally good people in the world around us that we begin to think, maybe they are all saved! When we should be thinking, "What am I saved from, if I am just like everyone else?" **The doctrine of "grace" that Jesus did everything, and we only have to believe, has made the way so broad no one is excluded.**

Much is made of the verses in **Romans 8.35-39**. True, if we are faithful, since God cannot be unfaithful, nothing can take away our salvation, but we can take ourselves out of His will and protection. Little attention is given to these verses in **Romans 9.22** regarding the olive branches which were the Jews which did not believe and were cut off, that we as wild olive branches can be grafted in: "Boast not... For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity, but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off!"

Such is the deception of picking and choosing the verses that agree with what we want to believe. Can we trust our own judgment? Not if we are seeking our own will. We will filter the information to keep only what agrees with our belief. Only when we become as a little child, willing for all that God would teach us, are we free from self-deception. The religious people in Jesus's day were fully convinced they were children of God. But were they?

Jesus gives us the answer to that. They had added to the scriptures, took away from the scriptures, and formed their denominations adapting the old covenant to their liking. The Christian world has done the same with Jesus's teachings, and all are "saved" just like the Jews thought they were. God had taken away the natural blessing he promised to the Jews if they obeyed the law, and thus there were great multitudes of sick people, not because they were worshiping idols as in other occasions in the Old Testament, but because

they had perverted the law with their traditions and teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. They believed that they could not do good on the Sabbath day. They had added that to the law.

Jesus could have said to the ones that came to be healed: "You know, the Pharisees are going to be offended if I heal you today, Saturday, and I don't want to offend them. The law does not prohibit doing good on the Sabbath, but they believe that, so come back tomorrow, and I will heal you tomorrow." If He had done that, if He would have approved all their doctrines, He would have never been crucified. It was the "sinners," the publicans the harlots, those the Pharisees had rejected and considered beyond salvation, who gladly heard Jesus. They were far from perfect, but they were needy.

God has compassion on such, but rejects those who consider themselves perfect, as did the Pharisees. Far better to be a struggling soul, trying by the grace of God to take steps of faith, than to live in a fantasy world of believing we are beyond temptation and sin. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. We must have a perfect purpose, a perfect heart, but we will always be aware of our human condition, and what the human is capable of. A field can be planted to good seed and cultivated a thousand years, and yet one year that it is left to itself, it will be full of weeds.

So, where are we? Who are we? God is a just God, in spite of what we want to believe, His word is right. The Ark of the Covenant had to be carried on the shoulders of two Levites. After it was returned to Israel by the philistines it was many years, 20 it says, a long time, in the home of a family. It was much longer than 20 years. It was from the days of Samuel, through the 40 years of Saul's reign, and into the reign of David, that they had not enquired of it. David prepared place for it, consulted with all the people, "if it seem good to them, and if it be the Lord's will," to bring it to the place he had prepared for it. There was the danger: If it seems good to all, and, if it be the Lord's will. It should have been, "If it be the Lord's will, and then it will seem good to us."

They made a new cart. They had never seen the ark which represented the presence of God, among the people, carried on the shoulders of two Levites, which was a type and shadow of the new testament ministry, that the gospel would be carried to people by two of the apostles who were living and show Christ to others by their way of life and how they treated each other. It was in the scriptures, but they had not seen that done, since the time it was taken captive by the Philistines. It worked! They went up hills, down hills, crossed fields and streams, rocks and holes, and it worked! If the two Levites that were directors, instead of burden bearers, did remember what the scriptures said, they would have been feeling quite proud of themselves for having improved on the way to worship, freeing themselves from being servants and burden bearers, and becoming directors.

Many justify their commercialization of Christianity, saying, "God has blessed them, with a large congregation, a beautiful temple, music program, social programs etc.," it works for them. It worked, yes; it worked until they came to the threshing floor. The threshing floor was a flat place, a hard surface, where they placed the wheat bundles, for the oxen to tread on to separate the grain from the straw. It represents the place of judgment. And there, on a flat hard surface, where oxen always walked and never stumbled, the oxen stumbled! One of the men reached forth his hand to stay the ark, and he died! It is so clear, if we are willing to receive it, that sure, we can modernize our way of serving God, do it as we have seen it done, not as the scriptures say, and it seems to be working, but what awaits us, on the judgment day?

God is not mocked. Maybe some won't see much in this word picture, maybe we won't see ourselves in this picture, but I hope all can see in a measure the care, love and concern that Gods servants have for His people. Our enemy is cunning, far more cunning than we. We are no match for him. For those who oppose themselves and refuse sound doctrine we can pray and pray we will, as we read in James, that Elijah prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain for over three years. It was not that he wanted to punish Israel, who all thought they were right, but in the way of transgression, that they would have no peace, no rest, no satisfaction. God is able to bring us through experiences to wake us up, to bring us to himself, as a chastised child to find the true comfort we thought we had.

With much love and care,

LeRoy Lerwick
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Leroy Lerwick passed away March 31, 2024
