

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God

IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

#08-1407

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Come, Let Us Reason Together

In one translation, the heading for Isaiah 44:9-20 reads: *The Folly of Idolatry*. As I read these verses, a thought came to me regarding how the Lord's people seem to come so close to the truth of the salvation of all or, as some say, the reconciliation or restoration of all things, without truly arriving at it. It is as if a partial blindness is in play, or as if they cannot make that final leap into the full circle of God's love, even though a logical analysis of *God is love* would lead them to only one rightful conclusion: *For this is ideal and welcome in the sight of our Saviour, God, Who wills that all mankind be saved and come into a realization of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and mankind, a Man, Christ Jesus, Who is giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all (the testimony in its own eras [i.e., times or seasons])* (1 Timothy 2:3-6 CLV).

I contend that the traditions and precepts of men are idols of the heart that keep us from the truth of God. We will come back to this thought, but first, let us consider what Isaiah has to say to us about the folly of idols.

The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!" And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" (Isaiah 44:13-19 ESV)

This is a great example of the blindness of religion when one leaves his logic at the door, so to speak, as he enters the realm of religion. Follow the illogic of what these idolaters were doing. They plant a tree and raise it for themselves for two totally opposite purposes. The first purpose is quite acceptable, if not necessary. They plant a tree in order to use the wood to make fires upon which to cook food for their sustenance and to keep them warm in cold weather. But then take note of the second purpose. They take the other half of the wood from the very tree they planted in the first place and make it into an idol. They make it a god and fall down before it, a block of wood, and worship it as if it has life and power beyond them. In other words, the very thing that they fashioned out of a block of wood, they make into a god to deliver them.

Now, stop and think for a moment, and answer this question: How could someone be so blind as to do such a thing? Don't they see the illogic of what they are doing and saying? But here is another question: As Christians, are we susceptible to the same illogic in our understanding of God and His truth? You see, over the years, I have met Christians who believe things that belie logic when it comes to truth. In fact, somewhere along the line, I heard someone say that we don't need logic for we have faith, which implies that faith has no logic to it. Do you really think this is true? Do you think that God is not logical in what He does? Do you think faith and logic are incompatible?

What is logic? *Logic* is "the science of correct reasoning; science which deals with the criteria of valid thought"; it is correct reasoning; valid induction or deduction: as, logic shows a better course." Simply, *logic* is correct reasoning.

Here is an example of logic: (A) God is love, and (B) love never fails; therefore, (C) God never fails. $A+B = C$. Given $A + B$ and concluding that God fails would be illogical.

Let us not forget that the Lord called the sons of Israel to reason with Him: ***Come now, and let us reason together, Says the LORD, Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool*** (Isaiah 1:18). The Hebrew word for *reason* is *yakach*, which, according to Strong's *Concordance*, is "a primitive root; to *be right* (that is, correct); reciprocally to *argue*; causatively to *decide, justify* or *convict*." Reason is one of the arguments of logic, for it is the ability to think, form judgments, draw conclusions, etc. The Lord reasoned with the Hebrews based on if and then statements, which is the heart of arguments of logic. He wanted them to think rightly, to come to the right conclusion. If they consented, then all this would be applied to them. If they did not consent to it, then they would be devoured by the sword.

Do you think that God no longer wants to reason with us, as if this went out the door at Calvary? Do you think Paul never tried to reason with his Jewish brethren and detractors? Acts proves otherwise.

When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening, he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. (Acts 28:23-24 ESV)

If we consider the Jews in the days of Jesus and Paul, they had two glaring problems that blinded them to the truth. They thought that since they were God's chosen people and nation, they held special favor with God and would not be held liable for what they said or did. Simply, they could do no wrong. Their second problem was called the tradition or precepts of men. Consider Jesus' indictment of the Jews in His day.

'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.' "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." (Mark 7:7-8 NASB)

Are we immune from this just because we believe and have faith? Paul did not think so.

Keep watching out for and beware that someone will not be the one progressively (or: repeatedly) carrying you off captive (as booty or a prey) through the philosophy and empty seduction (or: a trick having no content) being handed down in the tradition of men (or: corresponding to the thing handed along from humans), down from (corresponding to) the elementary principles (rudimentary teachings) of the organized system (the world [e.g., the religion or culture]), and not down from (in accord with) Christ.... (Colossians 2:8 JM-NT)

Brethren, this is a real danger for us today as well. The danger has not changed. Perhaps, it is even worse in our day. After all, it takes years for the traditions of men to develop and take root. We have had 2,000 years for the traditions to leaven our thinking and to dull our logic to the point that we no longer see the danger. They are called *idols of the heart*; they are not idols formed out of wood and things we make; they are idols of thought that we call *truth*, but are no more than traditions and precepts of men. As John wrote: *Little children, guard yourselves from idols* (1 John 5:21).

Let us come out of the folly of the traditions of men! Let us seek to know the heart of God! If you reason with God, I believe that by His spirit He will reveal His infinite love for all mankind, for He wills all mankind be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Love demands it, for love will never fail to conquer all, to the glory of God and His Son.

Come, let us reason together!