

The Starting Point

From Ronald L. Dart's Program Notes

In Nancy Pearcey's book, *Total Truth*, something was brought into focus. But it didn't come together. She observed that a common weakness of evangelism is that we start with redemption. That's true, especially among evangelicals. When there is an altar call at the end of a sermon, it can't help but control the entire sermon. The object is to bring the sinner home. Evangelism starts with redemption. You've probably seen signs on the sides of barns, or in neon lights on top of temples in such places such as downtown Los Angeles, "Jesus Saves." Yes, but what does that mean? Saves from what? Saves for what? What is meant by that?

Billy Graham used to cry out, "Christ is the answer." Does anyone ever ask, "Yes, but what was the question?" Christian evangelism seems to me to be all bound up in their own jargon. It is good that, in spite of all that, they found enough people who felt they needed saving from something, and came to accept Christ. And some of those people experienced a changed life as a result.

Nothing said here, and nothing Ms. Pearcey says, should diminish the idea of redemption in the least. That said, she advanced a kind of

framework for a world view composed of three elements: Creation; the Fall; and Redemption.

Her argument is that the place where evangelism should start is not with redemption. It should start with creation. For without this truth at the foundation, nothing else means anything. Unless you believe in the creation, the idea of a fall is meaningless, and so is redemption. Man is just a terrible accident that the universe would have been better off without. Except, without creation, there is no better or worse. Oddly enough, this country

and its system of government started with creation.

"We do hold these truths to be self evident. That all men were *created* equal and were endowed

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These Are the Days that Try Men's Souls. . .

You may have been laid off your job. Or maybe your work week has been cut to only 30 hours. You go to the grocery store and prices have soared. Items you used to pay \$2 for are now almost \$4. That adds up in a hurry. How is a person to make ends meet in this economy? You may already be working two jobs. How can you add another one and still spend time with your family and with God? We at CEM know it's tough for you. We are constantly praying that God will bless you and your family. That he will multiply what he gives you so that you can make ends meet. It's always taken faith to tithe. We've been there. Ron and I tithed when Ron was a freshman in college and the two of us together only made \$3,600 that year—read it again, it wasn't thousands of dollars, but hundreds. But God blessed us. I think he blessed every bean we put in the pot to cook—and we did eat a lot of pinto beans that year. We also moved into a cheaper apartment. The next couple of years, we couldn't believe how the blessings kept rolling in. God was always with us. We had faith that he would be. He blessed us abundantly. He's waiting to bless you as well. Try him and don't give up. He'll be there for you.

What's A Christian To Do?

Part 2, by Richard Glasgow

(Continued from Part 1 of the same title in the August, 2013 issue of Living to Win)

There are two other Scriptures used by those who argue against participation in politics. One is John 18:36: “. . . My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” Here, Jesus is responding to Pilate that he was, in fact, a king, but that his Kingdom was a heavenly Kingdom yet to come. It wasn't his time to establish his Kingdom on earth and, for that reason, his servants weren't authorized to fight to prevent his arrest.

Another important Scripture used on this subject is Philippians 3:20-21: “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (NIV). This is probably the primary Scripture people use to preclude themselves from participation in local, state, or national politics. The King James Version uses the word “conversation.” A look at Strong's concordance clearly allows for the word “citizenship” to be used, but

parenthetically notes that the meaning is “figurative.” It's right and proper to claim “citizenship” in the Kingdom of Heaven; but we're not there yet. It's a Kingdom yet to come and, at that time, we will be living there in the Kingdom of God, literally, not figuratively.

It would be more accurate to say we have dual citizenship. Here's the *dictionary.com* definition of citizenship: “the state of being vested with the rights, privileges, and duties of a citizen.” Clearly, we are also citizens of whatever country in which we were born. In my case, I'm an American, a citizen of the United States, and am able to exercise all of my rights as a citizen if I choose to.

Looking back through the Bible, we read about how the patriarchs let their light shine among the rulers and kings of their time and, for the most part, were influential. Some even played important roles in governments. Joseph and Daniel became top officials because of their wisdom, intellect, and ability to lead—all while serving God.

The prophets were integrally involved in appealing to the leadership. They courageously spoke out against corruption and consequently weren't often popular

among the hierarchy. Still, they let the chips fall where they may and did what God expected of them by pointing out the sins and transgressions of the rulers and the people. They didn't just judge and condemn the rulers; they genuinely tried to get them to change unlawful customs and traditions that were harmful to the country.

One such example is found in Ezekiel 18:21-23, where God is talking to Israel through Ezekiel about turning away from the sinful way of life, which leads to death. Here God is virtually pleading with Israel to keep his decrees and do what is right so they may live and be happy. This message is found throughout the prophetic books. The prophets preached God's way of life so people would prosper and be able to live in peace.

The ancients lived under monarchs and dictatorships, but still did what they could to influence change when change was needed. Even under the rule of despotic dictatorships there were people of God who were able to persuade the rulers to be kind and upright for the good of the people.

(to be continued in the next Living to Win)

Short Takes

Uppermost in the mind of our readers is the question of how Ron Dart is doing—how his recovery is progressing. All of us look forward eagerly to the time when he can once again teach and preach with the depth and insight that we all enjoy so much. More and more, as he listens to his own broadcasts, watches the news, or attends a church service, he'll make a comment. We've decided to collect a few of his comments to share with you in this column.

After listening to the *Samuel* CD series portions about David, Mr. Dart commented, “What a man! Even when he was bad, he was loved. There's a lesson in that for us, today. You can't be so bad that God will stop talking to you. You can always find your way back, if you don't forget who God is.”

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by their *creator* with unalienable rights: Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” If these rights are not unalienable, if they are not given by divine right, then where do they come from? Did we create these rights on our own? Did they arise from a European philosophy? Do they depend on majority rule? And what if the majority changes its mind?

Oh, well, we have the Supreme Court and our Constitution, don’t we? How many people would you guess that today, after the court decisions of recent years, with a Supreme Court citing precedents from other countries, still believe that our Constitution will always provide a barrier against the loss of our rights?

The courts recently overturned years of jurisprudence and a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution. They allowed a local government to take private property away from a free American family, and give it to local developers to improve the city’s tax base. Why did they do this? Well, it seemed like the greater public good demanded it.

This is one of the worst ideas ever to find expression in American courts. It is expediency at its worst. The word, expediency, brings another occasion to mind. Right after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, a miracle the likes of which no one could have even imagined happened.

Lazarus was long enough dead for decay to set in, but he walked out of the tomb at Jesus’ command. Right after that, we have the response of the religious

establishment of Judea: “Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:45-48).

It is only in this that you can explain the enduring animosity of the establishment toward Jesus. It wasn’t their religion they were worried about. It was their *position of authority*. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the High Priest that same year, said unto them, “. . .Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is *expedient* for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (vv. 49-50) .

Now it turns out that Caiaphas, being High Priest that year, had unwittingly prophesied that Jesus would die for that nation and more. However, Caiaphas did not have that in mind. He had in mind saving his own miserable hide (and his power).

It was deemed *expedient* that Jesus die for the *people*. How much evil has been done in this old world because it was expedient? Our Congress, our entire political system is driven by expediency. What will work and what won’t work. And now the courts, who are beyond our reach, are becoming the great expeditors, the arbiters of what is best for us, the people. They see themselves as conciliators, problem solvers, those who smooth

over conflicts. If we don’t like the expediciencies of Congress, we have at least a shot at them at the ballot box. And Congress is always looking over their shoulders to see if we are watching and wondering how this will play with the voters. The courts are not bound by that, because we don’t vote for them.

If this sounds like a digression, let’s try to bring it home. The place to start, in government, in the courts, even in the schools, and certainly in evangelism, is with *creation*.

Wherever we look, whatever issue we address, here is the question we must ask. How does this relate to the original creation of the world and of man in it? What was God’s purpose? Why did he do it this way rather than another? When you abandon this approach you are, in a word, lost.

“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:14-17).

Having said this, Paul then writes something that is as fresh as today’s newspaper. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who [*suppress*] the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them” (vv. 18-19).

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Note well, we are not talking merely about ignoring the truth. Paul speaks of actively suppressing of the truth. The truth about what? “For the invisible things of him *from the creation of the world* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). In other words, you can clearly see the invisible evidence of God from the Creation. They are understood from the things that are made. Paul starts with creation. Now, where do you end up if you dismiss that? “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing

themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (vv. 21-23). Well, at least we don’t do that any longer. Or do we?

When you believe that the entire structure of life on this planet created itself, haven’t you made the creeping things the creators? Where does this lead? “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that

which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet” (vv. 24-27).

You need to have a clear understanding of this. So, order this CD of *The Starting Point*. It will shed enormous light on the problem we’re facing today with legislators wanting to make same-sex marriage legal. Your understanding will be opened wide. You will gain a clue why the Apostle Paul was so adamant about this. There is no reason to think this is a homophobic tirade. It is a simple fact that cannot be denied. Simply call 1-888-BIBLE-44 and order your copy today or return the enclosed card.



Come To The Feast

As Ron and I drove home tonight, we took note of the big, beautiful moon that will be full tomorrow night—one month from when the Feast of Tabernacles will begin.

CEM, John Beasley, Fred Porter, and Paula Hughes have given their best efforts to provide you with an unforgettable Feast, September 18 through September 26, at the beautiful Arlington Resort Hotel and Spa in Hot Springs, Arkansas. You’ll find beautiful Lake Hamilton, Lake Catherine, the Ouachita Mountains, and you’ll be surrounded with fresh autumn beauty and Christian friends. We need you and we want you to join us. When you get there, you’ll realize just how much you need our outpouring of love and hospitality. Friends will welcome you with open arms. CEM has spared no effort in spreading a spiritual, Christ centered Feast with everything you’d expect to find. Check out CEM’s website at www.borntowin.net for specially priced accommodations and come rejoice with us. You’ll be glad you did.

As a help, we have included a map in this issue showing the free parking lots available to everyone attending the Feast at the Arlington Hotel. You can pick up free parking permits at the valet desk. Keep them to display in your car each day at the Feast. If you prefer, valet parking at the hotel is \$2 for two hours, and \$4 for four hours.

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*That the man of God may be
proficient and equipped
for every good work.*