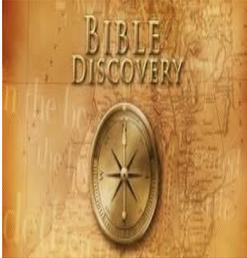


25 May 14

Romans 8:31-39

No Zone for Zeal in Zoroastrianism



Error is always hanging around our hearts waiting to lead us astray and to send us onto the wide path of destruction.



I remember the story of the flight of the first fully automated commercial airplane. As passengers relaxed in their seats at 35,000 feet, the automatic pilot came on the speaker to welcome them. *"Thank you for flying the friendly skies with automated systems. Nothing can go wrong, nothing can go wrong, nothing can go wrong..."* We laugh, yet sometimes it feels like our lives are like that.

The problem is there's no vivid road sign warning us when we're deviating from the truth unless, as His sheep, we are walking with the guide of our lives, our Lord Jesus Christ. The good news is that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us once we've received Christ as Saviour having surrendered our hearts to Him. Jesus told the disciples He would send God's Spirit into the world to *"convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment"* [John 16:7-11]. Each of us has a "God consciousness," whether or not we admit it. The Spirit applies the truth of God to minds of all humans to convince them by fair and sufficient argument that they're sinners. Responding to that conviction brings men to salvation. The Spirit's presence within us enables us to understand and interpret God's Word. Jesus taught His disciples that *"when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth"* [John 16:13]. The Spirit reveals the whole counsel of God as it relates to worship, doctrine, and Christian living. He's the ultimate guide, leading the way, removing obstructions, opening understanding, making all things plain and clear.



You see, Jesus did much more than send His Spirit and remain aloof, far from understanding the turmoil we endure in our daily lives. Jesus came as a baby, born in a borrowed manger, was raised to manhood learning to obey his earthly parents, learned a trade as a carpenter and then taught us about His heavenly Father. John 14 reminds us if we've seen Jesus we've seen the Father!

In what is today, modern Iran, the ancient Persian religion Zoroastrianism from about 600 BC within the empires of Cyrus and Darius (to which we learn of from the Book of Daniel) and founded by the prophet Zoroaster, Zoroastrians believed that there was one universal, transcendent, supreme god Ahura Mazda or the 'Wise Lord' of both being and mind. They also believed in a second god of chaos. They believed that the supreme god continuously struggles with this second god - the spirit of evil and that for humans and animals alike (the created ones) active participation in life through good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep chaos at bay. It's all about good works within our individual will! In Zoroastrian tradition, it's through benevolent acts the Creator's presence is immanent in humankind, through which the Creator interacts with the world.

In Zoroastrian tradition through benevolent acts Creator interacts with world!

The Creator will ultimately prevail over evil at which point the universe will undergo a cosmic renovation and time will end. In the final renovation, all of creation—even the souls of the dead that were initially banished to "darkness"—will be reunited in the creator god, returning to life in the undead form. At the end of time, a savior-figure will bring about final renovation of the world in which all the dead will be revived. Estimates are that there continue to be as many as 2.5 million followers of this religion today. It is suggested that many of its tenets have crept into other religions, including Christianity.

3-fold problem!

- 1. Dependent on creation to interact with their god through good works to gain eternity.**
- 2. Doesn't matter how you live – everyone wins!**
- 3. Our God not struggling with sin.**

The source of the problem in this philosophy is threefold – first, it's dependent on all creation to interact with their god through good works – teaching that people, through being good, will earn themselves a ticket to eternity with God; and secondly, that it really doesn't matter how you live – sure you may be banished to darkness for a time, but in the end everyone wins and is reunited with the supreme god – so why worry! And third, perhaps most importantly, we don't have a god who struggles with evil, with sin or with winning. No not at all. We know that God, the creator of all things is Victorious! Let me make this distinction very clear. All the rules and rituals in the world can't give the victory – can't make us righteous. We need a miracle from the One True God. We need His grace. We need Jesus. Jesus tells us when we face calamity and temptation

to fear not. *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* [John 16:33]

And that brings us to the main distinction between Christianity and our faith in Jesus Christ, and Zoroastrianism – in fact all other religions. Many people assume that Christianity is all about following the teachings of Jesus, just as, say, Confucianism is about following the ethical sayings of Confucius, or Zoroastrianism is attained through the interpretation of the dreams of the prophet Zoroaster. People think that Christianity inspires the faithful to follow the biblical stories of Jesus and other heroes of the faith, just as Muslims mirror Muhammad or Hindus celebrate their gods and goddesses. But there's much more to it than that.

Christianity is rooted in the historical event of Jesus – God Himself taking human form, dying to save us, and rising from the dead. It's not an inspirational **story**! These things really happened, and we are the beneficiaries of these events. When we've a relationship with our Heavenly Father, when we're filled with His Holy Spirit; we not only commune with the spirit of Jesus, but because His blood bought our forgiveness, we've been restored to a right place in fellowship with God. Yes, we try to follow his teachings, but not to pay our fare to the afterworld, but as our expression of thanks for His rescuing us.

It is in this truth that we find victory. It is in the solid foundation of Jesus' life given for us and in His resurrection and in His promise to return to claim His kingdom in its entirety that we have established our faith – which is itself a gift from our Heavenly Father. We're more than conquerors through Him who loved us. [vs. 37]

So then, what is our testimony? Are you beaten down, are you ready to give up because of troubles, hardships and persecution? Or do you attend church, going through the motions? Are you there out of duty, or routine, having for so long attended church on Sunday you wouldn't know what else to do in the time slot? **Or** are you ready to proclaim to all the world that Jesus is your Lord, your Saviour! Are you ready to stand with the Apostle Paul to shout, *"If God is for*

Truth gives victory!

Solid foundation of Jesus' life given for

us...

us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” [vs. 31-32]

My friends, it is because we've the God who is the "I Am" – who was, and who is and who is forevermore, that we've certainty for everyday and in every situation that we shall prevail. It is because our God is the creator of the entire universe and is sovereign sitting upon His throne for all eternity that we've confidence to surrender to Him and to trust our lives to Him.

Let us proclaim our lives, our homes, our church as a no fly zone – as no zone for zeal in Zoroastrianism – in fact no zone for anything except for the presence of the Holy Spirit knowing that in all things we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ in whom we can do all things because He is our strength! Amen.

