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Remove Not The Ancient Landmarks

~ Tony Turner

Years ago in New England, they had a tradition called “walking the line”. Every spring, New England farmers would walk their property lines to re-establish their boundaries and corner stakes. The harsh winter conditions destroyed sections of stone fences that separated the fields. The poet, Robert Frost preserved that annual ritual of New England farmers in a poem titled, “Mending Walls”. There was even a Connecticut statute once that required officials from neighboring towns to “walk the line” every ten years in order to maintain true boundaries.

This, of course, is a Bible principle: original boundary lines for the family inheritance of the children of Israel were marked off and recorded in Joshua 14-24. The Law forbade the removal of any landmarks, Deut. 9:14. In Deut. 27:17, “Cursed be he that removeth his neighbors’ landmark”. “Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set”, Prov. 22:28. However, some did remove them and they suffered the wrath of God, Micah 2:1-3; Isaiah 5:8-10.

The Old Testament Prophets made a spiritual application of this principle. God’s people were changing the boundaries of God’s Word. They were crossing over the confines of the Law; modifying the standards of right and wrong, Hosea 5:10-12. One example is when they willingly walked after the commandments of Jeroboam to worship the golden calf at Dan and at Bethel, Micah 6:16.

It would be well for us today to appreciate the spirit of God’s Prophets and the attitude they had towards “the ancient landmarks”, particularly in regard to the ancient landmarks of Christianity. We are living in an age where many of the doctrines of Christ have been uprooted and tossed aside. The original terms of salvation have been torn down and changed. The moral and ethical codes of Christianity have been reformed and altered. Ladies and Gentlemen, we need to walk the line and keep the boundaries of Christianity straight.

The landmarks of Christianity are confined to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. All authority was given to Christ, Matt. 28:18-20. God the father gave Jesus Christ all authority. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him”, Matt. 17:5. Christ’s authority was revealed in Old Testament prophecy, “Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you”, Acts 3:22-23. The Apostles revealed the complete authority of Christ, Heb. 1:1-2; Eph. 1:20-23.

Jesus Christ speaks to us today through the New Testament. “Then said Jesus unto those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”, John 8:31-32. Jesus gave us His Word through the Apostles and they wrote it down by Divine Inspiration, John 16:12-15; 1 John 1:1-4.

The New Testament then is our only standard authority in all matters of religion. It’s called “the Perfect Law of Liberty”, James 1:21. It contains everything necessary for living a life that is pleasing to God, 2Peter 1:3. God’s Word will accomplish exactly what it was sent to do, Isaiah 55:10-11; Rom. 1:16-17.

We cannot change its landmarks or move its boundary. God forbids us from altering His Word in any way. We cannot add to it or take from it, Rev. 22:18-19. God forbids us from going beyond it or substituting anything else for it; “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ hath both the Father and the Son”, 2 John 9-11. We must stay within the confines of the New Testament. There

are warnings throughout the New Testament; “But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which you have received, let him be accursed”, Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Tim. 4:1-4.

In conclusion, what needs to be done today is for everyone to “walk the line”. People need to survey their life and condition before God. People need to examine their life and see if it is in conformity to the New Testament. People need to make sure that they have not removed “the ancient landmarks” of Christianity. The landmarks of New Testament Christianity are: Jesus Christ is the only head over His Church. Jesus Christ built only One Church and it is the Church that wears His name; that preaches His doctrine; that worships God according to the New Testament pattern of worship. The New Testament terms of Salvation are Hear; Believe; Repent; Confess; Be Baptized; and live a Faithful Christian Life.

The problem with altering these landmarks is first, it is a direct disobedience to God! Second, it is cheating people out of their spiritual property rights; their right to be saved, John 3:16; Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 3:9. Thirdly, the New Testament is what is going to judge us! Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”, John 12:48. Won’t you make a fair appraisal of your life today?

Fruits Of Affliction

Dan S. Shipley

On Dec. 11, 1919, the citizens of Enterprise, Alabama, dedicated a most unusual kind of monument on the main street of their city. It was a monument to a pest! — to the boll weevil. In 1915 the Mexican boll weevil had disastrously invaded the southeast portion of Alabama, destroying a big portion of the cotton crop. As cotton was the economic mainstay of that area, the effects were immediate and devastating. But what appeared to be an almost ungetoverable calamity turned out to be a great blessing — because it forced the farmers to turn to diversified farming which included raising peanuts. By 1917 Coffee county harvested more peanuts than any other county in the nation. What had looked like a great loss only paved the way for unexpected prosperity. No wonder these fortunate people saw fit to show their appreciation for the lowly boll weevil!

As this story so aptly illustrates, adversity often carries with it the seeds of unexpected blessings. We see it in the life of Joseph whose misfortune of being sold into slavery by his brothers proved a great blessing for Israel. Spiritual Israel too, was born from the darkest hour in human history. From the cross comes the crown; from the curse, the blessing (Gal. 3:13). Persecutions scattered the early Christians and thus contributed to the greatest growth ever experienced by the Lord's church. Even Paul's imprisonment promoted the progress of the gospel (Phil. 1:12-14). "Sweet are the uses of adversity, which, like a toad, though ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head" (Shakespeare). However, the "sweetness" and blessings of adversity are not apparent to all. Some, in fact, not only fail to see any good from their troubles, they react with bitterness and resentment. As with the boat, it is the "set of the sail" that determines our course, even in contrary and unfavorable winds. The Psalmist says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted..." (119:71). Adversity **can** be good for us — it can be an effective teacher, but only when we are receptive students — like the apostle Paul, for instance.

For lesser men, Paul's thorn in the flesh may have served as an excuse for doing less. But he accepted affliction as a benefit — "that I should not be exalted overmuch". He could even say, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor. 12:7,10). Like Paul, we can learn important lessons in the school of affliction — especially the lesson of humility. Adversity has a way of revealing our littleness and insufficiency. It enhances our appreciation for concerned friends, both earthly and heavenly. In Christ we learn to evaluate our afflictions as being light, temporary, and beneficial (2 Cor. 4:17).

"Boll weevils" of affliction will continue to come — even to the best of God's people. With an attitude of defeat and despair, we only compound their bad effects. But with the eye of faith we can see and appropriate something good from most all of our misfortunes.