

# STRAIGHTWAY

*And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].*

## CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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### The Unique Christian

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Since my teaching and preaching years, I have thought that all books on theology should add another attribute to those which characterize Almighty God. That attribute should be "God is Unique." The word itself carries with it quite a variety of meanings which opens up a virtual fountain of glories and honors to God Himself. The Webster column includes: (1) "existing as the only one or as the sole example; single; solitary in type or characteristics," (2) "having no like or equal; standing alone in quality; unequaled; unparallelled; incomparable," (3) "impossible to duplicate within a stated or implied scope, as a geographical area or range of experience; unlikely to be matched; extremely rare," (4) "the embodiment of unique characteristics; the only specimen of a given kind."

However, it may be that the distinctiveness of this word did not ultimately carry enough weight to be fully brought over into the reality of a transcendent attribute fully worthy of God Himself. Other definitions follow: (1) "limited in occurrence to a given class, situation, or area," (2) "limited to a simple outcome or result; without alternative possibilities."

### The Infinite and the Finite

Somewhere in all of these definitive presentations appears something of a frailty into which we would not desire to bring God at all. However, since the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was

incarnate in the flesh, we have God in two “unique” positions: He is unique in transcendent power; He is unique in condescension and humility in both His birth and death. Both of these unique attributes are seen in the extended wonder of the prophet Isaiah:

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:  
Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and  
let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our  
God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,  
saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways  
higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth  
not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud,  
that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word  
be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but  
it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing  
whereto I sent it (Isaiah 55:6-11).

In this passage we see an invitation given by Almighty God, in His unique way, for man to seek spiritual blessings from Him. Of course, we must see this in a typical and even a prophetic form because of the fact these spiritual blessings are from Christ, whom the Father sendeth. The people were urged to come to God speedily, and by repentance (verses 6-7); the people were informed that God’s grace was infinite (verses 8-9); His Word is powerful (verses 10-11); and, there is great joy for the believers (verses 12-13).

### **God’s Unique Surprise**

The unique wonder in this passage comes to us in surprise. We usually think of Almighty God in His thoughts and ways of omnipotence. But the uniqueness here is placed in relationship with finite man. His “ways” and “thoughts” here do not speak of almightiness above man, but for man, or more lowly than man. We marvel at God’s omnipotence; but we could marvel more, because of our need, for His lowliness as an undersupport to man. Usually, if any man provokes or injures man, especially if he does it greatly, man is very slow and backward to forgive. Often, even after man is forgiven by man, he might still hold a secret grudge in his heart. But it is not so with God. He is slow to anger, ready to forgive all true penitents, no matter how many or how great the sins may be. God’s promises of mercy and pardon are infallibly made good to man. Therefore, the prophet speaks most encouragingly: man need not fear to come to God or find mercy and

acceptance with the true God.

However, then this Great God reveals “the heavens are higher than the earth” as being the omnipotent support of Almighty God behind these lowly promises to lowly men. O, What a Great God!

Even when these heavenly and higher ways and thoughts of God come to lowly man, they come as the gentle rain comes down, as the snow from heaven, so beautifully and gently—to bring the “bud,” the “seed,” to the sower to grant bread to the eater.

God’s omnipotence harnesses His almighty power down to a trickle of mercy and grace like a Great Dam backing up millions of cubit yards of water to turn generators as well as spill, O so gently, God’s workings over the dam into the heart and life of the Christian.

### **The Rainmaker and the Rain**

Recently, in a sermon, I said I was glad God was not a mere meteorologist with excellent predictions of the weather, the climate, and the rain, in order that we might adequately prepare for the inevitable. I added that I did not desire to even use prayer to control or provide rain. I would not want God to always answer my prayers about the need of rain. This was said in spite of the fact that when I was a little boy there were times when saints of God gathered together in a drought and prayed for rain, and God answered their prayers. However, I would not like for rain to be dispensed by the prayer-warriors. I really believe that we need to pray about all of our needs, but in the final resolve we must see we need the Rainmaker for the human need of Rain. I would not want anybody on earth, humanly, to be in charge of or be the catalyst for rain. Only God, the Rainmaker, can know, truly, when and where rain is needed.

In the Old Testament, many of the accounts of the coming of rain or the absence of rain was committed to the prophetic word of a prophet of God. I would plead in those cases that the prophecy came from God, the Rainmaker, Who, alone, both by physical and spiritual values, knew the entire land and environment concerning rain. I certainly would not desire for any charismatic to be in charge of the dispensing of rain for the earth.

The TV tycoon, Ted Turner, believes that man can take care of the physical environment of the earth and pleads for the United Nations to pass laws for such and the environmentalists to proceed to enforce the laws for the saving of nature and natural resources. Well, I see some truth in the scenario, but not much. God has promised in the Psalms, particularly, that He will keep nature, and I think it is quite fitting that He proceed to do so.

Our share in the matter will profit a little, but very little compared to the resource of Almighty God Himself.

This entire picture reveals to us that God is truly unique above the universe, and God is unique in the universe. He is unique in His transcendence; He is unique in His immanence. He is unique in power and purpose; He is unique in humility and mercy.

### **The Unique Man**

Earlier in this article we referred to the two-fold area of the word “unique” as the dictionary extended. We can clearly see that the word may be appropriate to apply to both God and man.

Even the “natural man” (I Corinthians 2:14), in a distinctive way, is unique. Having been created in the “image and likeness” of God, to say nothing of the fact that he had an original righteousness, yet fallen, we can still see the influence of God’s mercy as well as God’s prevenient and common grace. Although man is depraved, he is not as bad as he can be. Many unusual and unique things have been performed by the natural man. He may be an artist; he may be an architect; he may be an earnest worker; he may be good and do good.

However, the uniqueness of the natural man is greatly incomplete and sadly lacking in the spiritual area of life. In these things man has fallen to the bottom; he could not be more of a sinner than he is as far as his nature is concerned. He is totally lost, but he is redeemable by grace.

Before leaving this study of the Unique Man, we must not confuse being unique with being eccentric. Some have thought the latter was but a synonym of the former. That is not true. The eccentric is out of the ordinary and even odd, but in the wrong direction. The eccentric is one not having the same center. He does not move in the law of a circle and its design. He is off-center, having its axis set off-center. An eccentric person is not unique.

### **The Unique Christian**

In view of the redeeming grace of God available to the fallen, natural man, we see the Christian as the most unique human creature of all. He is a “new creation” (II Corinthians 5:17). His faith vindicates this reality. The Unique Christian believes in the true God. The unredeemed man believes in a pagan god or an unknown god or some aspect of nature as god, or a demon-god, as in animism, or man as god, as in pantheism. None of these claims are really unique; they are the result of the fallen nature of the fallen man himself bringing about his own conclusions and imaginations.

The unique Christian believes in the revealed God of the Revealed Word of God. He believes in the dignity and power of God in Creation and Providence. He believes in God's orderly ways; God's attributes in the universe; God's love, mercy, and goodness for all creatures. The unique Christian believes in origin and destiny, children and parents, life and death, resurrection and glory, and time and eternity. The unique Christian is saved by grace alone.

### The Unique Fundamentalist

Being a separatist fundamentalist, I must include this testimony with this article.

The background history of Fundamentalism indicates that a number of theological and denominational distinctives were included in the birth of this movement. Somewhere in my readings the number 19 has registered who were identified in the stand of different denominations which could be found leading to the first generation of Fundamentalism. Of course, larger numbers came from fewer groups, as Bob Jones, Sr., from Methodism; William B. Riley, from the Baptists; and J. Gresham Machen, from the Presbyterians are prominent. These men were unique.

Possibly, we should understand that there were two distinct central truths which were prominent at first: one group dealt more with Creation versus Evolution; and two, and another group of fundamentalists dealt more with Biblical Inerrancy versus Higher Criticism. These were two unique emphases within the one testimony of fundamentalists.

The ultimate distinctives, most unique, were formulated in the great Biblical truths which ultimately became manifest in the core truth of the Bible. We think of a fundamentalist as one who believes as follows:

1. Maintains an immovable allegiance to the inerrant, infallible, and verbally inspired Bible;
2. Believes that whatever the Bible says is so;
3. Judges all things by the Bible and is judged only by the Bible;
4. Affirms the foundational truths of the historic Christian Faith:
  - a. *The doctrine of the Trinity.*
  - b. *The Incarnation, virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection and glorious ascension, and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ,*
  - c. *The new birth through regeneration of the Holy Spirit,*
  - d. *The resurrection of the ungodly to final judgment and eternal death,*
  - e. *The fellowship of the saints, who are the Body of Christ;*

5. Practices fidelity to the Faith and endeavors to preach it to every creature;
6. Exposes and separates from all ecclesiastical denial of that Faith, compromise with error, and apostasy from the Truth; and
7. Earnestly contends for the Faith once delivered.

The unique fundamentalist continues to have the testimony as follows:

*First, I am a Christian.*

*Second, I am a Fundamentalist.*

*Third, I am a Protestant-Reform or other Theological System.*

*Fourth, I am of a Christian denomination.*

No doubt, there are other distinctives which could follow, but we must be careful to always remain a unique Christian, first, then a unique fundamentalist, second, before we become a believer in a unique theological system of theological thought which somewhat declares us uniquely as a denominationalist.

### **The Unique Witness For Christ**

We should, at this point, declare why we proceeded as we did in the above Biblical priorities and distinctives. A unique Christian fundamentalist defines one individual within the singular corpus of his own unique Biblical faith, doctrine, and practice. This is simply acknowledging the New Testament of the Body of Christ with each of its individual members. This is what truly makes the Body of Christ unique, too. Without the Body there can be no united affinity and wholeness to the great Christian witness of Christ in the world. But without the Individual Members of that Body there can be no distinctive and deliberate witness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the need of the personal testimony of one-on-one, and one-to-one.

This is a day of union without unity, mass without the personal, the majority without an individual voice, and having credal faith without personal faith. This unique paradox of true things must be preserved.

We cannot afford, in our time, to be so independent in our Christian witness that we lose the confirmation and support of another Christian brother.

We must not be so denominational in our Christian witness that we lose sight of a theological witness that brings a larger emphasis to all the truth.

We must not be so dominated by the later theological systems of church history that we ignore or think lightly of primitive Christianity which appeared before the post-Reform systems were written.

We must not accept a theologian or his system as inspired, inerrant, and as infallible as the Holy Scriptures which was the only true Source of all true theologies.

We must always remember that Jesus protected the “children” from being offended for whom Christ died, because all Christians do not have equal knowledge.

We must always live for others as we practice our fundamental and true doctrines and beliefs, because the others we are seeking must also be led to the Savior, too.

We, as brethren, must respect the unique, individual faith of another brother in his own love and faith in the Holy Scriptures, because God intended such distinctives.

When we, as brethren, seek to see the fruit of the Word of God in our other brothers, then we will see more of the uniqueness of all the other individual testimonies.

If we, as brethren, maintain the Christian nobility of our individual walk with the Lord Jesus, with uniqueness, then our enemies will see that all of us are honest because we can differ with genuine Christian love.

We must prove, by our individual uniqueness, that no one of us will rig our Gospel testimony by covering up for each other, or lying in our inconsistencies and/or distinctives with each other with the hope to prove unity. The unique, conscientious distinction in every brother should complement the other, enlarging the unity within a single Biblical union. It should not be our aim to arrive at some appearance of a *manner* of fundamentalism, but rather the entire Christian *heart* of fundamentalism. The *manner* only lies in the appearance of the fundamentalist; the *heart* is the unique, the real person who identifies himself as a fundamentalist.

We finally persist: the singular presupposition for all is salvation by grace through faith.

### **Unique, Personal Evangelism**

Now in my seventies, I have finally found out that not everyone was to be a follower of the mass or personal twentieth-century methodology for evangelism. I have been very glad to find this out whether I am to be intimidated about this “hot” methodology or not.

I might even go a little further in this thought as an individual, unique separatist fundamentalist. When I started out in the ministry in 1952, I did

not know exactly what kind of an evangelist I was to be. I never was called to be a missionary on foreign soil, so I did not seek to learn modern foreign languages and customs. I never was called to be a denominationalist; in fact I had to make an exodus from one. I never was called to be an American evangelist, so I did not pursue the study of the Americana manner. I never was called to be a Christian administrator, so, as a major study, I did not prepare for such.

But I found out, in a humble way, that I was to be unique. It was at least a surprise if not a shock to me. In the second grade of a public school, I found myself studying books as my father preached to me the Book. So, after becoming a Christian at Bob Jones University, much to my personal amazement, I began to just get people to think about God. Yes, to just get people to think. That commenced my unique evangelistic efforts. The content has grown, but that remains my unique ministry to this day. My most thought-provoking evangelistic verse remains:

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (The words of the Lord Jesus; The Gospel of John; Chapter 14, verse 1.)