

God loves atheists, too.



“He causes His sun to rise on the wicked and the good, and He makes it rain on the just and the unjust. For if ever you should love those who are loving you, what wages have you?” (Matthew 5:45-46)

My faithful readers and listeners already know how much I dislike church signs. “Dislike” is an understatement. Most church signs are so unscriptural and God-bashingly stupid (they mislead people about God) that any random collection of letters on a sign would be better. For instance, “kdooiurkgaiu a-jdoulrlsla ddollal’uel” would be far preferable to the sign that I saw not very long ago, namely: ATHEISTS HAVE NO INVISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT.

Here they go again, these troubled Christians bothering the world with their own personal vexations. Christians see themselves as the darlings of creation, and God help everyone else, especially atheists. But of course, God will *not* help atheists (according to the Christians), because atheists have damned themselves by refusing God and His Christ. (The Christians, of course, are brilliant; they chose God *and* Christ by an exercise of their own will and intelligence). We all know what happens to those lacking the intelligence to recognize God in the creation and Jesus Christ as the Savior of that creation: such simple and foolish individuals go to hell for eternity. Is hell hot? It is so hot that Muslim women must wear Daisy Duke shorts. The Christians? They get golden thrones and air-conditioning. It is their eternal reward for outsmarting and outmaneuvering the atheists in the “choosing Jesus” department.

A BIG “WE”

No invisible means of support? Then what powers the atheists? Their own strength? The right assortment of vitamins? The devil? I would not give either the atheist or the devil that kind of credit. (Vitamins, maybe.)

Only the spirit of God causes anything to live and move. Satan can't create life, and neither can he sustain it; all is out of God. The creature certainly cannot will itself into life, or sustain its life day by day.

According to my opening verse, God causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike. Rain, in biblical days, was a great blessing. In an arid land so dependent on agriculture, rain was life. The presence of it even reflected, to the people, the presence of God.

The apostle Paul testified to this truth as well. Before the philosophers and intellectuals and atheists at Mars' Hill, Paul said, "In Him, we are living and moving and are" (Acts 17:28). That's a big "we" there, and it illustrates a grand truth: even atheists are somehow moving in Christ.

The church sign, however, knew nothing of this monumental truth because the pastor who posted it loved cleverness more than truth. "No invisible means of support." *Get it?* Nice play on words. Sorry, pastor, but I really can't bring myself to "lol" over that one. If only you hadn't blown up God's universal, life-giving care of His creation. That ruined it for me. If the goal of the pastor was a clever saying, then the pastor succeeded and my writing is presumptuous. But if the words were meant to reflect Scriptural truth, then the pastor tumbled into the abyss of human ignorance along with all of his other sign-writing cronies.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD



The first dictionary definition of "support" is "to bear or hold up, to sustain." We read in Romans 11:36 that "out of, through Him and for Him are all things." This verse is even better in the Amplified version:

All things originate with Him and come from Him; all things live through Him, and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him.

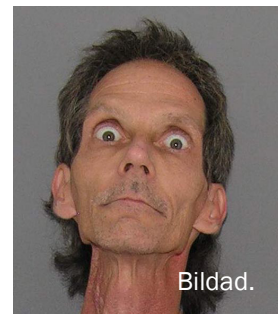
The part of the verse that I want to emphasize is: "All things live through Him." God sustains all creation. Nothing that lives, lives apart from Him. Again, what keeps atheists alive? *God* does, for "all things live through Him." No one and nothing else can give life. Even at the cross, Christ gave breath to the very soldiers who cursed Him. Such is grace. He knew that a part of God dwelt in them.

Let us never become exclusive by imagining ourselves the only recipients of grace. Either God sustains and supports atheists, or someone else does. Either God sustains and supports atheists, or grace fails. How could grace include everyone but atheists without losing its essential meaning? How could God tell mortal humans, "Love your enemies" if He, Himself, is incapable of doing the same?

THE DOCTRINE OF BILDAD

Job 8:20 says, "Behold, God will not support evil doers." But who said that? It was Bildad, the Shuhite, one of Job's so-called friends. But what does God say of the sayings of Bildad? Job 42:7-

"The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for *ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right.*'" God would say the same thing to the fashioner of the terrible church sign. I wonder if the pastor who posted that monstrosity knew that his doctrine was that of Bildad?



"EVEN THE WICKED"

We rightly conclude that God supports evildoers. But then the question arises: *Why does He do that?* As with Pharaoh, doers of evil help fulfill God's purpose.

► Proverbs 16:4- "The Lord hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

► Isaiah 54:16- "I have created the waster to destroy."

► Romans 9:17- "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee."

Another dictionary definition of support is "maintenance, as of a person or family." One way God raises up His pharaohs and keeps them there is by supporting them



physically. Thus, “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, for if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?” (Matthew 5:46).

Obviously, then, God loves and supports atheists. Why did the sign contradict that truth? (Hint: it was a church sign.)

“MUCH PATIENCE”

Another definition of support, and I quote directly from the Random House Collegiate dictionary: “To endure with patience.” Startling it will be for some to learn that these are the exact words Paul uses concerning the wicked in Romans 9:22. From the *New American Standard Bible*: “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?”

But according to this church sign, God endures (or supports) them not.

“THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD...”

As for atheists, they are no different than we once were. We came to God, not of our own initiative, but because of Christ’s spirit. We came because He first loved and called us (1 John. 4:10, John 6:44). He will one day call athe-

ists, too, because His love is the selfless variety that does not rest until it seeks and saves the last lost sheep (Matthew 18:12. For related truths, see 1 Timothy 1:15, Isaiah 45:23, 1 Corinthians 15:25). The blood of Christ’s cross is the most effective prescription for all enmity, either on earth or in heaven (Colossians. 1:20).

Remember, “God locks up all in stubbornness that He should be merciful to all” (Romans 11:32).

Let Scriptural truth, not clever phraseology, guide our errant church sign erectors, not that I have any real hope of this happening. It will never happen in this eon—unless, that is, *I* start a church. Now there’s an idea. The message on my church sign would teem with life and Scriptural truth. My message would stop people in their tracks (or in their cars), and probably cause several accidents. It would be a message so simple, so true, so resplendent with the wisdom, grace and mercy of God, that none but the scripturally ignorant and proud of heart would attempt to refute it. My church sign would read:

God loves atheists, too. —MZ

