

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## When Truth Doesn't Match Conviction

By Stan Cox

This past week the Mueller report was submitted, and the Attorney General of the United States revealed that the report exonerates the President from the charge of criminal conspiracy to collude with Russia in the 2016 election. For the last two years many leaders in the opposition party were convinced that the President was guilty. Now that the report has been released, recommending no indictments, many continue to believe in his guilt.

The purpose of this article is not politics. I am aware that many want to see the report before making any final decisions, and that others will not be satisfied until they not only see the report, but the mountain of documents upon which it is based. My point is that many will stubbornly hold to their personal conviction regardless of what is actually so. And this tendency is not limited to a particular political party, or even politics itself.

Throughout world history, men have been slow to accept truth. The basis of racism, (that some races of people are superior to others), is demonstrably false. And yet it persists in our time. Galileo's astronomical observations led to the realization that earth orbits the sun instead of the other way around. It earned him the title of heretic from the Catholic church.

The primary reason for this is bias. If a person has a settled conviction on a matter, it is easy to ignore evidence that refutes his conviction, and to wrongly “interpret” information to justify his belief. That is why the partisanship in political discourse is so prevalent. My guy can do no wrong, and your guy is a hypocritical and dishonest monster.

Of course, there is great danger when a settled conviction causes one to reject a truth from God's word. The consequences of such a bias can be eternal in nature. Consider the words of the apostle Peter here, *“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures”* (2 Pet. 3:14-16).

Peter speaks of untaught people who twist scripture. Ignorance obviously can lead to error. What is not as evident is the danger of being *“unstable.”* The term is an interesting one. As the objective is a proper understanding of scripture, an unstable individual is one who is not resolute (stable) in his acceptance of that proper understanding. Anything that gets in the way of an acceptance of truth can cause this instability. A settled, but wrong conviction is an obvious source. This is easily demonstrated.

The Calvinist allows a mistaken, but settled view of the sovereignty of God to color his thinking about man's redemption. He denies the concept of free will, and rejects the idea of apostasy. He does so in the face of scripture that clearly affirm both. Jesus spoke of free will (choice) when he told the disciples, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mk. 16:16). The Hebrew writer clearly warns of the possibility of apostasy in Hebrews 6:4-6, *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”*

The man who has been taught his entire life the conviction that we are saved at the point of faith considers

baptism to be unnecessary. He refuses to accept the declarative statement of Peter, ***“There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*** (1 Pet. 3:21).

The same biases exist when discussing denominationalism (as it contradicts Biblical exhortations to unity in thought and doctrine, cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-14); marriage, divorce and remarriage (as men chafe against Jesus’ words in Matthew 19:9); and even such simple things as the designation ***“Pastor”*** (which men attribute to a preacher, but scripture designates as an overseer, cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2).

It is easy to see the biases in other people. When they champion their candidate, and overlook his foibles and mistakes, we shake our head knowingly. It is much more difficult for us to see our own bias. In fact, a term has been coined to describe this — “blindspot.”

Spiritually, this can be devastating. This is why so many admonitions are given regarding false teaching. Paul told the church in Ephesus, ***“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”*** (Eph. 4:14-15).

Open your minds to truth when it contradicts your settled convictions. Remember, ***“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”!*** (Jn. 8:32). – ***Sound Teaching***, March 26, 2019. ■

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### ***“Evidence of Things Not Seen”***

By Greg Gwin

Picture her – a young girl taken captive in a war – an innocent victim in a dispute between powerful countries. Now, her freedom gone, she is obligated to perform slave duties in the house of the conquering army commander.

Who is this girl? She is a minor payer in a well-known Bible account that centers on her slave master. And, who is her master? Naaman is his name, and his story is found in 2 Kings 5. Naaman, as you recall, was a successful army captain – but he was also a leper.

The lesson from this slave girl is found in verse 3 of the text. Without any hint of the hatred or bitterness that could have easily filled her heart, she suggests a positive cure for her master’s affliction. ***“If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.”***

From this minimal information we can classify the young girl as a person of great faith. Why? It is because of her one simple statement. The prophet she had reference to was Elisha. How did she know he could heal leprosy? Someone might suggest that she had seen him do it many times. No! In fact, he had never done it before! Jesus said, ***“many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian”*** (Lk. 4:27). She knew he could do because she had FAITH IN GOD!

Faith is the ***“evidence of things not seen”*** (Heb. 11:1). The Bible speaks of many things that we have not personally observed. Do you believe them anyway? There are many things that God has said, including eternal promises He has made to us. Do you trust Him? Are you confident that He has the power to do all things? Judgment and your eternal destiny will be determined by your reaction to things you have not seen.

How strong is your faith? Will you obey Him (Jas. 2:26)? — Colleevue church of Christ bulletin articles, January 27, 2019. ■

**Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM**

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