

Chronicles of July  
(Who Then IS God?)

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I've written a number of journals since I got here at USP Tucson in late 2012. Anyone who has read my journals online know that I have over 500 pages on my life while doing time. I try to write based on my life in prison, which includes a variety of things. One of the most interesting has been about faith.

Quick to the point, I am a Christian; I was before I got locked up, and I still am. Don't get it confused that Christians NEVER get in trouble, or that every Christian in prison "found God" after they were arrested. That's not always the case.

Today's entry is of a controversial one, so I am not saying there is a definitive answer to this. But my faith in God, and in Jesus Christ has me questioning what I have read. Not the Bible; that is not what I am questioning, rather the Bible study I was working on.

You see, there are hundreds of Bible study courses for inmates to take. The problem is that with every lesson, each ministry has its own set of values, some contrasting with others. Who then do you believe? Who then IS God, if 50 different ministries declare different aspects?

Anyway, let's jump into this; as I usually do, I will "PAUSE" in parts to color some sections in. Let's begin:

July 18th, 2017: 10:14am on a boring Tuesday. Went to indoor rec to watch stage 16 of the Tour de France; was it Matthews who won the stage? Croome is still the overall leader.

(PAUSE: One of the things I loved doing was watching sports. Inmates spend a lot of time watching sports, but few watch cycling. I was fortunate to know a guy in indoor rec who also liked cycling; in fact, he's from France, so the Tour de France was important to him. I think he and I were the only guys watching it intently. Helps pass time. Anyway, let's continue...)

Mark wasn't there; I thought he might be, but wasn't. Bummer. Ian wasn't there either. Roy was, which saved the morning. The guy's like a little brother to me. So, what to do at 1pm- probably go type this stuff for John, with what little typewriter ribbon I have left. Money's got to come in soon. I need stuff.

Anyway, I was working on Philippi Ministries Bible Study Course, of which I've done and completed 3 lessons, and got a certificate from each. But on this lesson, Book 4 of their lessons, titled, "Does He Hear My Prayer"; Process and Procedure," while I enjoyed doing the lessons, I came across something that troubled me.

On page 21, there's a section about proper prayer being composed from doctrine resident in your soul. Yet there's a point they make: "To pray a prayer that you know is incongruous with the plan of God must generate doubt and therefore unbelief". Then, there's this point, "To ask the ability to do God's will but through extraordinary means, is a violation

of the plan and will of God."

Why? Are they saying we can't ask God to do the supernatural? Then why call on God? But it goes further with their example, "To pray that yourself or someone else will be healed of cancer; or to pray for the gift of miracles and healing so that you can heal yourself or someone else".

Oxford dictionary defines "incongruous" as "out of place; absurd". So, what are they saying? Are they (the ministry) saying that to pray for miracles or the supernatural is AGAINST the will of God? How can they imply that praying for a person's HEALING is against the will of God? If I have a loved one dying of cancer, how can I think, if I'm a believer, that God DOESN'T want that person healed? THAT is absurd!

(PAUSE: Folks, I realize some of the most confusing issues we as people have is often based on religion. But somewhere in the depths of Christianity there has to be some basic beliefs. One, that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and was resurrected by God. But another has to be this; that God is LOVE... how can God NOT care about a person's health as well as their salvation? I just didn't believe what this ministry was saying. But there's more, as we continue...)

Then it goes even further. On page 25, under praying for the unbeliever, it goes, "Our prayers should therefore appeal to the justice of God to bring the target (the unbeliever) to a point of maximum mental receptiveness." It then says, "This can be brought home to the target by personal disaster to himself or others- poor health, illness, accident, disease, loss of property or loved one".

WHAT??? You mean to tell me that as a Christian- with the love of Christ and the love of God in me, I'm supposed to pray that unbelievers get sick, get into an accident, lose their job or home- or even a loved one, just so that they'll turn to Christ?

Are you kidding me? It continues, "Disaster is many times a way of focusing a person on what is top priority in life". Yeah, and more times than not it DESTROYS them!

What are these people saying? So, I'm supposed to say, "Dear God, I pray that you kill Ian's mother so he can turn to You", or "Holy Father, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ that you take everything from Mark, so he can turn his life to you". What a HORRIBLE way to intercede!

I had to pause from my lesson to think about that. I am NOT in agreement with this philosophy- not at all. How can we say that God is love, but then NOT pray for the people to be healed, and rather pray that God does something terrible in an unbeliever's life, so he MIGHT turn to God? That's not how it works at all.

Jesus didn't go around cursing people; He went around doing GOOD. Those good deeds brought people to the gospel; nothing in the Bible supports what this ministry is saying. Jesus said the things He did, we're to do. You can't curse somebody to turn to God, you have to love them and pray for them in a way that helps them... sigh, I've lost all respect for this ministry. I barely want to finish the letter. I don't believe their philosophy- not at all. Oh well, it's 10:45, we go to chow very shortly- chicken patty I think- I'm hungry too-

(End of journal)

So, you see how I felt about the situation. I know I am no theologian, and I bet I didn't even spell that right, but something just didn't seem right with their ideals. Jesus said that the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. He said that He came that we may have life, and to have it more abundantly.

How would it look for God to go around killing people's family and friends, to get people to accept Christ? How would YOU like some so-called Christian praying for YOU under those beliefs? I don't want anybody praying for my family to die, or me to get stabbed up so that I can turn my life to Christ. That's not how it's done at all.

I am not saying I got it all figured out, but one thing I do believe is that you have to care for one another. I mean, what is the royal law; isn't it to "Love your neighbor". How can you do that if you wish evil on him?

In prison, this goes in triplicate; so many guys here are hurting, and need to see good things in their life. They have to know that God loves them, not knocking people upside their head with the Justice Stick.

It has me wondering sometimes, "Who is God, if different ministries say different and conflicting things about Him". But when I get to that point, I go to the Bible and pray on it. I mean, God is LOVE, that has to be the motivating factor in all He does. Here in prison, I try to do what I can based on the love God has for us, and His mercy. I don't always get it right; I blow it sometimes, but I cannot give up on the guys here, because I believe God loves them just as much as anybody out there.

So I finished that lesson, and sent it in- got a certificate, but what does it really mean? I don't change my faith; I believe God loves, not curses, so I continue to do what I can to help others here. Again, I'm not perfect, so I do the best I can.

Anyway, that's all for now, until next time...