

The Grumpy Disciple #5

The Invisible and Unspoken Doctrine

Copyright 2014 Mark Lee Golden markleegoldenwriter.com

I think there's been an unspoken, "invisible" doctrine in churches, synagogues, etc. It's passed down generation to generation: we are to pray, for it is our duty, but, we are to never expect to actually obligate or compel God to answer - yet it pleases Him that we are obedient and have made the requests.

Although God is extra pleased with "those who have not seen, yet believe," there are honest doubters who would like a miracle or two to help them cross the line into a living, lasting faith. And, there are many believers for whom a miracle or two would greatly help them be more committed. Too often, I think, the lack of such manifestations is something we don't talk about - as if we're doing God a favor. We don't want to embarrass Him or pursue His private reasons for this unexplainable passive behavior. And we don't want to be embarrassed for believing in a big, powerful, but seemingly unreachable God. We talk about the "Bible days" like proud fishermen who say to the newcomers, "You should have seen the one that got away! If only you had come (centuries) earlier!" But isn't this sort of a bluff, in that, we can't produce a miracle working God, just as the fisherman can't produce the really big fish?

Sure, mankind is always in the dog house, but, couldn't God occasionally toss us a bone down here - some awesome and tasty ones?

In contrast, not seeing any such activity from Him is quite acceptable in most synagogues, churches and elsewhere. Many opponents of the Bible (me too, some 37+ years ago) point to the ancient records of miracles that unfortunately "somehow" cannot be found occurring today. This conflict appears as proof enough of little need to invest in religion. At this point in a debate with Christians, they regroup; emphasizing the need for salvation, God's love, or whatever else they hope might attract and hook new followers.

Is it the common view that to expect anything, let alone, *much* from Him will lead to trouble - fruitless hopes ending in less belief or a stagnant faith? The flip side of this is that we don't know which general or generic prayers God answers! So, if anything good and unexpected happens we attribute it to Him as sort of a "Way to go, God!" moment, complete with high-fives. We place another sticky gold star on to God's chart, knowing that though He is so silent, He cares. If God actually didn't orchestrate the good *something*...well, He gives us a gold star (of sorts) for having assumed He did!

Because of the Invisible Doctrine, I believe we'll even take as a "sign of God's goodness," when we get that "perfect parking spot." But, in America this can lead us to seeing God as fickle. Sometimes He wants us to have "the spot," other times He doesn't...*His ways are deep and*

mysterious! When the mobile heathen get the perfect parking spot they sputter, “Cool!” to no one but themselves. Yet, the godly knows who is responsible when they get it – right! Do we really know? How can we?

When we have “something” real and not questionable (like a parking spot story), something that is hard to debate away, then it glorifies God to blab it. Is the problem that we don’t know how to twist God’s celestial arm in order to get Him to score some major new points?

Believers feel that they are doing the “right thing” when they send their requests, notices, thanks and updates to God by prayer. Yet, in day-to-day real life circumstances, non-believers lives (if paralleled) look and live much the same as believers. For non-believers this only solidifies, more so, the *unnecessary* inclusion of a God-based belief system in their lives. Sunday morning is a great time to catch up on sleep, watch the game or maybe get some things done around the house and hey, keeping that 10% in the pocket sure helps out too!

God is probably pleased that religions turn out nicer, more law abiding people. But, I dearly want to believe He still has more up the sleeve of His robe. Might He want to invade the norm and challenge our often times complacent acceptance of the safe and sane Invisible Doctrine? Instead of, He’s up there honest! Just let Him be. Don’t ask why!

These Things Make Me Grumpy...