

Dirk DeWinkle

Greyfriar's Hall

8/3/2010

## **The Consequence of Confusion**

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and He revealed Himself to Adam. He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden. Then Adam sinned, and he gained the knowledge of good and evil. The ironic thing about this knowledge is that it darkened his own mind and all of his descendants' minds. Despite their sin, God loves men and He continues to reveal Himself to them in two ways: by creation and by His Word, the Bible. Every time God manifests himself to mankind, man can respond in one of two ways: love God and be enlightened, or hate God and stick his head in the sand. The wonder of the former of these two options, is that God is gracious, compassionate, loving, and forgiving, and He displays these attributes to men who submit to Him. The problem with the latter is that it results in confusion, pandemonium, and ultimately death.

Genesis 11:1-9<sup>1</sup> tell the story of the Tower of Babel. This text comes on the heels of the genealogies of Noah. God created the world good, and man's sin led to God's desire to cleanse the world of mankind with the flood. God graciously saved Noah, and established a covenant with him, complete with rainbow and the explicit command, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” (Gen 9:1)<sup>2</sup> (This was a continuation of the creation mandate given to Adam - Gen 1:28 “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.”)

At the Tower of Babel, we see that the men of Babel rejected this commandment and determined to seek their own glory. “Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” (vs. 4) God saw their pride (vs.5)<sup>1</sup> and confused their speech. (vs. 7)<sup>1</sup> Thus He accomplished His purpose despite their sin (vs. 8)<sup>1</sup>, and they were “scattered abroad over the face of all

the earth.” (vs. 9)<sup>1</sup>

In this case, confusion is a curse from God, but it is also a tool God uses to further His plan for the world. God does confuse hardened sinners, but that confusion does not become an excuse for future sin. Rather, God accomplishes His ends through confusion, and then gives us light to see His truth.

### *God Confuses Hardened Sinners*

Ever since the Fall, confusion has been a part of human experience. When Satan deceived Eve, her confusion led to the the fall of mankind. Lies and deceit are the tools of God's enemies (the devil, the world, and our own flesh). They are designed to confuse and hide the truth, shade our eyes from the light of God's revelation, and turn black and white into gray. The frustrating thing about this is that sin has caused the world we live in to be full of gray.

The confusion in Babel was sent by God, to accomplish His purposes, because men had rejected His commandment. Besides this passage, there are other texts that identify confusion as a curse of God. In Deuteronomy 28, Moses proclaimed the curse of confusion on the Israelites if they fell away.

20 “The LORD will send on you cursing, **confusion**, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me...

28 “The LORD will strike you with madness and **blindness** and **confusion** of heart. 29 And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save *you*.<sup>3</sup>

Also, in Psalms 35, 40, and 70, the Psalmist asks God to curse his enemies with confusion. “Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who seek to destroy my life.” (Ps. 40:14)

As we saw at the tower of Babel, when a society turns away from God, He will turn them over to confusion, and it is a corporate judgement. They become disjointed and lose unity. This is a consequence of their hard-heartedness. Unfortunately, the culture we live in today is a society that has also chosen to close its eyes to the light of God. When we go out into our streets, and into our society, confusion greets us at every turn.

Some of this confusion is silly and childish. For instance, political correctness and ridiculous warning labels are silly. Political correctness mangles our language and tends to make communication vague. Moreover, the confusion that exists in our courts forces companies to state the obvious (e.g. Warning: Hot Coffee is Hot), or do the ridiculous, like put braille on the *drive up* ATM machine.

Some of the confusion is insidious and sneaks into Christian homes: Entertainment is one of the main culprits for this. Popular music, television shows, and movies rarely glorify God. Professional sports played on Sunday violate the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment. Worldly philosophies and materialism are preached in public schools and workplaces. These things are confusions because they play an unholy bait-and-switch game on Christians. They originally offer things that are adiaphora or good in the right context (entertainment, sports, or knowledge), but gradually, over time, entice Christians away from God's truth by adding things that seem minor until immodesty and wickedness are given the nod of approval. We need to be on the lookout for these sneaky enemies of faithfulness.

Finally, some of the confusion is an openly waged war against our God. The pluralist, atheist, secular state denies God in the public square. Relativism runs rampant trying to silence the voice of Christian witness (absolute truth). The divorce rate continues to rise and marriages lie about who Christ is. Drug use grows as confused sinners seek an escape from reality. Evolution denies God's glorious creation. Gays, lesbians, cross-dressers, and whatever other weirdness you can imagine demand recognition, and get it. And to top it all off, they're killing babies. There's no question about it, we live in a modern-day Babel. This is God's judgement on our nation for our hard-heartedness.

## *Confusion Does Not Excuse Sin*

Now the problem arises, that if God curses men with confusion, and they sin as a result of their blindness, then how can God hold them accountable for the sin? They are *blind* after all! Also, the enemies of our faith (the devil, the world, and our flesh) are deceitful. They hate God, they are our enemies, and they are constantly trying to trip us up.

Confusion and ignorance don't excuse sin. When Moses wrote the Torah, the priests were given chapters of details on how to sacrifice and atone for sins of ignorance or sins committed unintentionally. (Lev. 4,5; Num. 15) The point is that blood was required for these sins even though they were unintentional. God doesn't ignore them. Moreover, Paul tells us that God's revelation is sufficient, and that unbelievers are without excuse in Romans 1.

18 For the wrath of God **is revealed** from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because **what may be known of God is manifest** in them, for **God has shown it to them.** 20 For **since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen**, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that **they are without excuse.**<sup>3</sup>

Sin is sin is *sin*, and unforgiven sinners will burn in hell whether they were confused, ignorant, or sinning high-handedly. They are *without excuse*! The gospel, the good news is that there is a Savior. There is salvation. God turns confusion to clarity, He makes hearts new, and He gives life to the dead.

## *God Accomplishes His Ends*

God loved the world and sent His Son to save it. God has never tired of revealing Himself to men. Where men rejected the commandment and were struck with blindness, Jesus fulfilled the commandment and shines light on all men. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me

shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12) But men rejected Jesus too: “The light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” (John 3:19-20)

Men turned Jesus over to Pilate and crucified Him. However, even here we see God using confusion to accomplish His purposes. In John's account of the crucifixion, Pilate is revealed as particularly agitated and desirous of setting Jesus free. In John 18, Jesus told Pilate,

“You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

Pilate said to Him, “**What is truth?**” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no fault in Him at all.” (vs. 37, 38)<sup>3</sup>

Pilate was confused. Jesus was ultimate truth embodied, and Pilate had the gall to ask *Him*, “What is truth?” He wanted to set Jesus free because he didn't think that Jesus deserved death. But every time he came up with a way to accomplish his purpose, the Jews stopped him. Finally, he submitted to his confusion and participated in the greatest atrocity of history, the murder of the Christ. But God used Pilate's confusion to carry out His own purposes, the greatest victory in history, the salvation of mankind.

The ultimate deception God used was the deception He pulled on the devil. God allowed him to murder Jesus by means of the Jews. Satan had attempted to deceive Christ many times through His earthly ministry. In the desert, through Peter, by the questions of the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, and every time Jesus shut him down. Finally, by the treachery of Judas, Satan thought he'd found a way to rid himself of Jesus. But what he didn't realize is that by nailing Christ to the tree, he signed his own death warrant.

## *God Enlightens the Confused*

Jesus came back from the dead and, like Joseph forgave his brothers, Jesus forgave the Jews. “Joseph said to them, ‘... You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.’” (Gen. 50:19) In Peter's sermon at Pentecost, he accused the crowd of murdering Jesus, then proclaimed the gospel to them. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:36)

God did far more than His enemies could ever have imagined. He didn't just save men from hell. He bound humanity to Himself. He brought mankind into the Godhead in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit reversed the curse of Babel. God revealed Himself yet again. His light shined again in the world and He established His kingdom here on the earth in His church. All God's people are united together now into one tower that actually ascends into the heavenly places every Sunday. This tower is the body of Christ. God's problem with Babel was not that the people wanted to reach heaven. It was that they wanted to reach heaven outside of Him, and outside of His Son.

The world wants you to close your eyes to all of this revelation, the devil is grasping at the heels of everyone he can get, and our flesh fights us every step of the way. But God is truth and light and goodness. He loved us, He died for us, and He redeemed us from the darkness and murkiness of sin, death, and confusion. He has turned the grays of this world into a clear, colorful picture of His glory, and He will finish the painting. “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face...” (1Cor. 13:12)

## *Conclusion*

What it boils down to is this. In this world there is a City of God and there is a City of Man. These cities are at war with each other, and you have to ask this question: Whose citizen are you? In order to evaluate this, here are some further questions to consider: How is your family worship? Thought life? Bible reading? Prayer life? How are your entertainment standards? Work habits? Web-surfing habits? Are you focused on Christ, or your checkbook? The kingdom, or your comfort? Evangelism, or “not stepping on toes?”

Fortunately, Christians have the truth and the ability to think clearly. Confusion doesn't stand a chance. All of creation cries out, and the Bible points the way to the truth. There are only two choices in responding to God's light. It will either make you grow, or sear your conscience. Don't hide your light under a basket. Let God use you to build His kingdom. Run the race that is set before you. Our lives are but a vapor, and the time is short. Choose Christ and forsake confusion.

1 Gen 11:1-9 1 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. 3 Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. 4 And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. 9 Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (Gen. 11:1-9, NKJV)

2 All quotations are taken from the NKJV Bible

3 emphasis added