

The Procrustean Bed

Procrustes lived in Greek mythological antiquity. He was a highwayman who lived in ancient Attica. He had an iron bed, which he believed was the standard size bed because it fit him. He believed everyone should be the same size, which conveniently was his own. He tied every traveler on his iron bed and if they were too short, he stretched them to fit and if they were too long, he cut off their legs to fit. Thus we have the term we use today called the Procrustean bed, which has come to mean an arbitrary standard to which exact conformity is forced.

Christianity was never intended to be a “Procrustean Bed.” In I Corinthians 1:12 it says, “*Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*” Later Paul emphasized again in I Corinthians 3:4-7, “*For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*” To be delivered from the temptation to align ourselves into a sectarian approach to the Christ-life, please receive these following admonitions, from this pastor, your brother in Christ:

1. Individuals make up Christ’s Body.

“For the body is not one member, but many...And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary” (I Corinthians 12: 14, 21,22). We should not expect all of us to be alike anymore than we can expect the feet to function like the eye or visa versa.

2. We have a fundamental base of belief in Christianity.

The Apostle’s Creed is that statement of belief handed down to us from our church history, believed to have been dictated from the apostles, followers of Jesus and then to the next generation and following. Although there are slight variations, it states very eloquently, yet simply our basic belief:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth.
 And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
 Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died and was buried.
 He descended into hell.
 The third day He rose again from the dead.
 He ascended into heaven
 and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
 From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy Christian Church,
 The communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.

3. We believe in soul liberty and the personal priesthood of the believer.

We believe that each and every believer became a Christian by direct access to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (I Timothy 2:5). We believe our children are under the authority of parents who in turn are under the authority of God. Hence, the training for our children who have professed faith, are to be trained to be free in Jesus. This does not mean a license to sin: *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”* (Romans 6:1-3).

This means we take our freedom in Christ and our cherished beliefs and live them out. *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord...”* (Joshua 24:15). In our household we attempt to steer away from anything that would violate our biblical convictions and obedience to our Savior. We attempt to take seriously the mandate, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”* (I John 2:15).

4. We believe that abdication of our freedom in Jesus is a breach of Christ’s Lordship over our lives.

Allow me to explain. In recent years, some of my Christian brethren have laid aside charity and, with man-made lines of demarcation, drawn lines that are not biblical or necessary. In our attempt to be good, decent Christians we shall pare our fellowship down quite well enough without manufacturing other reasons to do so. As we know there is nothing new under the sun, the Bible says,

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). If man’s traditions are rooted in Christianity, let’s fall in line with our brothers as we all follow Christ. On the other hand, we do not get our marching orders from Wall Street, Washington, Broadway or Hollywood on how we should behave as Christians. Sometimes I feel like the church is being corralled into separate stalls to receive our brand. And too many have sectarian or worldly banners under which many are making commands to marshal. I will not be stretched nor cut on the proverbial Procrustean bed.

My Lordship is to Christ alone; I will not share His dominion over my life with any other. *“Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords”* (I Timothy 6:15). All influence over my life must come under His authority. My dedication is to Christ the person, not his disciples, no matter how dedicated. Christ is my first and foremost Creed. My belief and love of Him shall not be exercised under even the attempt of so-called spirituality of self-made tyrants.

I also commit my love to those who name the name of Christ in truth and sincerity. I will not be stretched nor cut, nor will I place my brother on the Procrustean bed. *“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts”* (Psalm 119:63) *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations”* (Romans 14:1). I will say with poet, Edward Markam:

He drew a circle that shut me out,
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took him in.

-Pastor Pope-

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