

How Christians can be superstitious

By Andrew Corbett, April 2006

www.andrewcorbett.net/articles/superstition.html

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The Alarming Increase In Supra-Gospel Foolishness

Grace, says Philip Yancey, is the distinguishing and unique quality of Christianity, in his best-selling book: *What's So Amazing About Grace*. We respond to God's grace both with relief and unfortunately, disbelief. The essence of grace is that it is entirely unmerited and undeserved. If we can do anything to deserve or earn it then it ceases to be grace and becomes wages or a right to be demanded.

Most Christians understand this but restrict God's grace just to the event of salvation. While professing to believe in grace they then proceed to practice superstition which is the belief that a physical object or human routine can manipulate the spiritual realm and God in particular! Thus, some Christians have turned prayer from a privilege of grace into a superstitious exercise. Let me explain...

"Christian" Banners, Flags, and Trumpets?

What makes something "*Christian*"? We hear the expression describing shops, internet sites, books, music, businesses and poetry. While this can be done innocently it can become a heretical extreme where things are given spiritual power to manipulate God and the spirit realm. Firstly, we need to understand that the adjective "*Christian*" can apply to nothing except a redeemed, Holy Spirit regenerated person! So, when people call church banners "*Christian*" and believe that if they wave them during a church service they will invoke the blessing of God or expel demonic spirits or curses, they are now being superstitious!

One website promoting "*worship banners*" and "*praise flags*" makes this astounding set of claims-

Our banners, silk and other fabrics, are an expression of our worship. The Lord reveals them to us in creative inspiration. Some are solid colored flags, and He tells us the meaning of each color.

Others are dyed and/or painted symbols on silk representing attributes of the Lord, visuals of biblical descriptions, or elements used at His command to further His purposes. With them we praise and honor our glorious Lord, do spiritual warfare, celebrate His goodness, rejoice in His work and the wonder of Who He is! Yabweb Nissi: The Lord is our Banner!

To believe that by waving a banner or blowing a ram's horn that something changes spiritually as a result, is not New Covenant - it is mystical Christo-superstition! The elaborate mystical symbolism assigned to some Church banners would only be artistic if it wasn't for the ludicrous claims made by their promoters that certain spiritual power is guaranteed if they are used.

When Paul wrote to the Galatians he condemned their decline away from God's grace into superstition (where they had believed that the works of the Spirit were earned by the works of the flesh). *Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?* Gal.3:2-3

Whenever we promote the idea that things or routines have spiritual power over, or with, God or the enemy we have become superstitious. We can make seemingly good things like faith, prayer, fasting, giving, or even worship into a superstitious act - because we believe that if we do these things God must do something for us. In other words, the working of miracles is achievable by works of the flesh as Paul said in Galatians. *Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith.* Gal.3:5

Turning Faith Into Superstition

If we think that if we can only have faith in God then God must act, we have turned faith into superstition. The Scriptures declare that even our faith is a gift from God. "*For by grace are you saved through faith- it is not of yourselves- it is a gift from God.*" *Eph.2:8* Paul told the Galatians that they had been "*bewitched*" because they had accepted the false teaching that a work of the flesh ("*work of the law*") could produce a spiritual result in and of itself^{*Gal.3:1*}. He reminded them that any miracle, any work of the Spirit, was the result of God's grace and sovereignty. Yet today we hear people promoting a superstitious doctrine of prayer "*power*" where praying is disgracefully held up to be the means by which we can coerce God into action on our behalf, or even worse- do "*battle*" with the powers of darkness! Prayer is one of the greatest privileges of God's grace and is the means by which we commune with Him in pouring out our hearts, presenting our requests, and stilling our spirits to hear His voice. A similar thing could be said about worship. Worship is presented by the superstitious as the means by which we advance the Kingdom and defeat the enemy, when in fact it was always meant to be about adoring God with no thought of the worshiper benefiting in any way!

Salvation By Decision?

The belief that we can do anything to earn, merit, deserve, activate, the salvation of God is called "*works*". Paul thoroughly condemns this. Positive elements of the Gospel have been polluted to make them a distortion of the Biblical reality. "*Repentance*", the act of turning away from sin and to God, has been made by some to be a prerequisite to salvation that the penitent must perform before being eligible for salvation. Biblically it appears that repentance is the gift of God^{*Acts.5:31*} and is granted by God^{*Acts.11:18*}. Preachers are called to declare its availability^{*Acts.20:21*}. Yet today there are people who teach that if a person makes "*a decision*" to follow Christ, it is this decision that will save them. This is a foreign Gospel. The Gospel is the declaration that Christ has paid the price—the Father draws people to His Son through the working of the Holy Spirit—who convicts of sin, gifts faith, and regenerates. If we have to do anything to earn it, like make "*a decision*", then it is no longer grace but works.

Things God Can't Do...

John Wesley said, *God can do nothing except in answer to prayer*. **He was wrong. Very wrong. God does not need our permission to do something.** Yet people teach that we must pray in order to get God to move on our behalf or even worse—to help God achieve His purpose in the earth today. Rather than telling God what He should do, we should be praying: *Not my will, but Yours be done*.

Others teach that God can't bless a city until all the church congregations in that city are "*united*" (as if each of us belonging to Christ didn't warrant enough unity!!). This is superstitious rot. They even cite Psalm 133 *when brethren dwell together in unity, there the Lord commands the blessing* as the basis for such fictitious preposterities. This verse is not holding out a promise but stating a fact. It is not merely suggesting that congregations gather together so that God can bless—its New Testament application is that we are all one in Christ and enjoy the blessings of such unity. The unity of brotherhood in Christ is the blessing of God!

God can't move/bless/revive unless...

[I'll leave you to complete the sentence, because whatever you put at the end of the sentence qualifies that sentence to be superstitious and no longer Biblical].

A Biblical Understanding Needed

Let's return to worshiping God simply for who He is. Let's pray to Him not to coerce Him, but to commune with Him. Let's proclaim a Gospel that promotes the centrality of Christ and His finished work on the Cross- validated by His resurrection, sealed by Pentecost, and vindicated by His parousia.

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