

Coffs Encourager

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Coffs Coast church of Christ
www.coffschurch.org.au

CWA Hall, 3 Dalley St. Coffs Harbour
Worship-Sunday 10am, Study-Tuesday 6pm



Copernicus' Dilemma

*...take courage,
Let the truth
of God sound
out loudly.*

Zechariah's Mission

*If God wants it
to happen, it will
happen!*

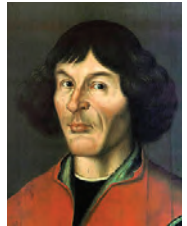
Rainy days & Cold nights

*There is nothing
like sharing with a
friend to lift those
moody blues.*

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COPERNICUS' DILEMMA

by Marvin Ancell



One of the truly great minds of all times was that of Nicolas Copernicus. He is a man that affects all that we do still today, even though he has been gone from this world for several centuries. His ideas and observation were the start of what has been called the 'Copernican Revolution', one of the truly great steps forward in science. It all came to be formalized in his book on the way that the earth and the sun revolve around in our universe. It was written in 1543, shortly before his death.

Now the point for this essay is not what he discovered as much as it is how the world treated this man of science who could prove his point. Copernicus thought that the earth revolved around the sun. The church of that day thought that the earth was the centre of the universe and all celestial objects revolved the earth. His thoughts were corroborated by an Italian scientist of the same day named Galileo Gallilei. Copernicus' thoughts were seen as heretical and he died for them.

Copernicus had a hobby. It was astronomy. In life, he was a Catholic cleric, a physician, a mathematician, a jurist, governor, and economist. He was truly a man of dynamic abilities and training. In his work in all of these various fields he was acceptable to all the authorities. It was in his hobby that he got into trouble. Copernicus had the audacity to conclude that the earth was not the very centre of the universe. All of the church saw his work as changing the world view and thus upsetting the church's traditional position on the heavens. The church

had spoken and he had the conviction to stand up and say that the church and her traditions were wrong. One did not do that in Catholic Poland in the 1500's.

The same basic observations that Copernicus had made were also made by Galileo. Both came to the same conclusion, separate from the work of one another. The church asked Galileo there in the Italy to public apologize for his observations on where the earth was in the universal order of things, on the threat of being excommunicated. He recanted; change his public view, and publically accepted what the church told him was right. Copernicus did not go down this road in far off Poland. He stood by what he had observed and by what he could prove as possible.

In Copernicus' case, the news of his theories had reached all the way to Rome. There was great interest in what he had to think. It seems there was also great pressure from his fellow clerics to just put it all aside and forget what he had observed: don't upset the apple cart for something as inconvenient as the truth. There was great disagreement over what should be concluded: church and science stood as opponents, one of the other.

That the world of science and the world of the church would disagree on such a point, at that time in history, is not really all that shocking. It is inevitable. The problem was actually one of power: "Who is in charge here?" It is still a problem today. Those in power do not like being told that the way they are conducting themselves could be improved. The church, any church, does not like having its long established ways of thinking challenged at all. We like things the way they always were. We do not like people upsetting the way things are. Copernicus struggled with what to do with his observations.

But, and that is the real key term here, 'but' there are things that need to be challenged, reconsidered, and adjusted from time to time.

That was Copernicus' dilemma. Should he shut up and let the finding be found again on a better and more accepting day? Should he recant his position? Should he just forget it all, because it was against the standing convictions of his day? Was it all just too much trouble to rankle the prevailing authorities? What should he do? What he did was to stand solidly behind what he had observed, regardless of what the authorities that were in power had to say. Truth itself was the victor.

The fundamental point in all of this, is that we need not fear standing up and challenging the way that people are used to thinking, not should we fear to do so. It is in the voice of dissent that we find the levelling tool to keep everything flowing as it should, growing in true truth all of the time, balanced before the Lord and before the world. That was the course of Copernicus' life. It caused him pain, sorrow, and the loss of friends.

Nicolas Copernicus died on 24 May, 1543, in Frombork, Poland. He had been in a coma for some time. He awoke from that coma, had his new book placed in his hand and died, knowing that his theories were published. He was right, and he did not compromise the truth.

I take great courage from the fact that in the life of this great thinker, lies the soul of how we should be ourselves: committed to God above all else, willing to see with open eyes, to question the conventional, and willing to accept the truth unconditionally, regardless of our biases. He was, and we should be, devoted to that which is true. We are called to be warrior-voices for truth and not closet-disciples. If more of this world had that sort of faith in what is obviously true, we would easily pass through the days of the heretics that oppose us.

The point is this, "No compromise with the truth is the way to live". In all of the matters of faith today, take courage; let the true truth of God sound out loudly.

Zechariah's Mission by M. Ancell

The book of Zechariah is not one of those Old Testament books that every one reads repeatedly, and that is to the loss of those who have not sat down and given it a good solid read and thought. It is filled with things that can help us make it through the storms of this day, or the morrow.

First, Zechariah is part of the great return to Palestine, following the leadership of men such as Ezra and Nehemiah. He is a contemporary with another prophet named Haggai. Their job was to help the children of Israel meet the challenge of returning to Jerusalem and rebuilding the city. Not a little task at all.

When such a task is undertaken it can be a bit daunting until we realize that if it is requested by and then guided by Jehovah, it will succeed. There is no question about its outcome if God is for it, and we are committed to it.

What happens, though, if all around us, there are people who come up with all of the "why we will not succeed"? We'll, stop and remember, just as in the book of Job, well meaning people who operate off of their own knowledge will never be up to the level of God. They will see why we should fail. But, if God, the all powerful one wants it to happen, it will happen, and no force on heaven or earth will be able to stop it from happening. Look at Gideon, and his 300 men fighting the Midianites 120,000 and winning. Who would have thought that an army of 300 die-hards, armed with candles, pitchers, and trumpets would have prevailed? Look at David versus Goliath and remember which one fell and which one should have fallen, according to the sages of the status quo. Look at the deeds of the fathers and see the great victories that have been accomplished by the men and women of faith and 'perspicacity'.

"Perspicacity" is the talent for hanging in there when it all seems hard and when we do not see the end, yet. When we lose the ability to see the victory we are weak and we will fall, but when we see the conclusion, before the conclusion is reached, we will keep on struggling and suffering and going on forward. That is the way of real strength and real victory for God. We must remember that God, the almighty, all loving, all wise, all seeing Lord is standing beside us.

To encourage one another to follow God means to claim the victory now, for He will not be defeated and He will not be deterred. Zechariah's mission, like our mission, is to keep reminding everyone of the majesty, power and vision of our Lord, God.

Sharing in rainy days, and cold cold nights

by M.Ancell

Rainy days always seem a bit oppressive to me. I do not have the same sense of vitality on a rainy day that I have on a sunny day. Are you like that, too? What I find for me, is that I get caught up in the feeling of being enclosed and forced to stay indoors, out of the weather, out of the way. I get a feeling of a loss of freedom and self determination. I thus slowly sink into a rather melancholy mood. This is the time when I really want some one to say something





that encourages me, rather than making me remember the cold, the isolation and the loneliness that comes with a rainy day. What can I do?

The rainy day blues is something that catches all of us, from time to time. We all can feel surrounded and shutoff from the action of living. It can even become rather suffocating and so we go get back in bed, pull up the covers and go back to sleep. This may be good weather

for sleeping, and if that is what we are really in need of, then it is as good a time as any to take a small kip. However, if it is simply to hide from the oppressive world outside of our door, be that the door of our house or of our heart, we will eventually grow even more down and depressed.

The best piece of advice that can be given to those who suffer from some form of 'cabin fever', need to get out of the house, out of the mood inspiring confines of our 'cabin', and meet the world full on with a reason for joy. Start by making a list of 25 things for which you are thankful for, things that are part of the "right here and now". Then go out and do something that shares one of those good things with another person whom you feel close to. There is nothing like sharing with a friend to lift those moody blues.

Find something to do and thus fill you hand, and chase the blues away with love and joy. God said to let our minds dwell on the things that are wonderful and beautiful, happy and joyful, on the things that are excellent and full of the spirit of spring time flowers. It is good for all of us.

Bits are falling off! (or looking at the ceiling)

by Heather M. Cox

Last week I went for my quarterly clean & check at the Dentist, altogether my favourite appointment - I even count down to it on the Calendar. As I was lying back contemplating the ceiling trying to be brave for the various manipulations of the hygenist, I endeavoured to think of a scripture to sustain and lift my spirits.

There were Paul's encouraging words.

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." 2Cor 4:16

Thank you Paul, I don't think you had teeth in mind but I needed that reminder.

However my most uplifting thought came from remembering verse 23, 24 and 26 of Psalm 73.

"Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. With Your counsel You will guide me, And afterward receive me to glory...."

26 ... My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. "

All good mental ammunition and especially heartwarming as the Dentist coming in to confer with the hygenist began murmuring words like "bone density, hmmm deterioration could be happening" and "Let's do some x-rays!"

Perhaps I'll print out a large copy of these encouraging scriptures, laminated of course, and give it to the Dentist to stick on the ceiling.

Next week I get the results of the x-ray comparison with those from Sydney - whatever the news, I know I'm in good hands.

