

Happy Valentine's Day

Joe Slater

Not even the Roman Catholic Church can decide with certainty which (if any) of three candidates is the real "Saint" Valentine. One popular view is that he was a "bishop" who kept on solemnizing marriages despite Roman emperor Claudius II supposedly banning marriage of soldiers in his army. This Valentine, so the story goes, was arrested and eventually martyred. Historical evidence is lacking; even referring to this as "legend" might be a stretch.

More likely, "Saint Valentine's Day" is yet another attempt to "Christianize" a pagan holiday. In this case, it's the feast of Lupercalia, a fertility festival honoring Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture. It was celebrated on February 15. Our calendar puts Valentine's Day on February 14. Oh well, close enough!

As with Christmas, Easter, and Halloween, celebrating Valentine's Day doesn't make you a pagan. Go ahead, give your sweetheart a box of chocolates! When people's minds are focused on the birth of Christ, it's a great opportunity to teach the truth about it. Ditto with the Resurrection. So let's use this holiday to teach the truth about marriage!

In American Society Biblical marriage has fallen on hard times. "Currently, 60% of all marriages are preceded by cohabitation" (foryourmarriage.org/cohabitation/). Hebrews 13:4 says, "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*" Folks, we have much teaching to do! Let us have the backbone to reject political correctness, "*speaking the truth in love*" (Ephesians 4:15).

BEING MISTAKEN

"Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong. How painful are honest words ..." (Job 6:24-25).

One evening after a family get-together, my father rode home with my wife Cindy and our children. The next day, my father told me that Cindy was "driving way too fast" and that he "would not ride with her again." His words stunned me; Cindy has never been a fast driver. I later solved the problem while driving her vehicle. The car came from Quebec, and the speedometer has a metric display. Sixty miles per hour reads out as almost 100 kilometers per hour! No wonder my father was nervous!

How easy it is to be mistaken! Every person who has ever lived (except for Jesus) has been mistaken or has made mistakes. One radio host in Nashville tells how he made financial mistakes "with zeros at the end." God's word speaks of those who have erred – Jacob, Moses, Saul, David, and Solomon, to name a few. Paul confesses that he was once "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and violent" (1 Timothy 1:13), and Peter even denied knowing Jesus three times.

God's word is not a written record of perfect people, and He holds back nothing. Intricate details of sin are often painstakingly revealed. Some may ask, "Why?" We must first realize that God is not "airing out dirty laundry." By including these events, God allows His people to see that errors can be overcome. Second, it provides hope to those who fall prey to the same situations. Last, it helps people to realize that mercy and forgiveness is obtainable (John 21:15 - 17).

Lord, help us to learn from the past!

Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

God's Will And Our Choice

Although Christ is an absolute monarch, He is no tyrant because He conquers no one against that person's will. It is utterly impossible to bring men under the power of Christ without changing their mind, their understanding, and their will. These very important changes take place through instruction in the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation.

It is not the aim of Christianity to govern men forcibly and externally. Christ governs through voluntary surrender to the will of God. Men must come to realize that God's rule of law is best. Men are not wise enough to rule themselves.

Every human government must be either pragmatic or tyrannical. It must either change as the people change and, in doing so, reflect their values and wishes; or else it must rule with the iron hand of a human despot.

Christianity does neither! Christianity can never be pragmatic because it regards truth as co-existent with God and, therefore, unchangeable. However, Christianity is no more compatible with the spirit of tyranny than of pragmatism. The will of Christ cannot be enforced by carnal means. One is never brought into the kingdom of Christ by coercion.

Even if Christians were in the majority, and if they could enforce their convictions by the sheer weight of their numbers, it would not be right to do so. Christ never intended for His followers to throw their weight around. Since the Lord does not force His will upon anyone, He does not grant His disciples that right either.

Bobby Key (deceased) via *Old Paths*