

Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.' Acts 10.34.

How many times have you heard it said that you can make the Bible say anything you want it to say? Of course that is true, *if* you miss out certain words, or take verses out of context. Last Sunday I gave you a good example of how, for instance, the gay Christian lobby twist the account here in Acts 10 of how God used Peter's vision of the sheet in the sky filled with animals he considered unclean to teach him that he must not look upon *Gentiles* as unclean. This is supposed to be a new revelation of a new truth to Peter. Acts 10 is thus an example, in the *Bible* no less, of how the Holy Spirit today is giving to the church a new revelation of a new truth that homosexuality, once condemned in the OT, is now OK.

The flaw *there* is that God is not in fact giving Peter a new truth, but reminding him of an *old* truth that was *always* in the OT. God *never* said *Gentiles* were unclean. It was *Jews* who concluded that. What *God* said was that he wanted to bless *all* the peoples of the earth *through* the children of Israel. Israel would in fact be a light to lighten the *Gentiles*!

I labour this point because it is vitally important that we do not twist the Bible to make it say what we *want* it to say. Great evil has been done as a result of this. The wretched system of apartheid in S Africa, for example, was based on a warped interpretation of the Bible.

Now, from Peter's speech here in Acts 10, I want to give you another example of twisting God's Word, which I heard recently with my own ears. A moderator of our own URC at the

induction of the Revd Bob Jones in Knaresborough took Acts 10.24-5 as her text. It was a good job I was following it in my own Bible, because she missed out something vital which changed the whole meaning. (This is why, by the way, I like you to follow the scriptures with me so you can make sure that I don't miss out vital bits!) The Moderator read out vv34-5:

'I now realised how true it is that God does not show favouritism, but accepts men from every nation' FULL STOP.

'God accepts people from every nation' clearly means that he includes *everyone*: no-one is excluded. And on this Bible verse she erected a whole edifice about how God is all-inclusive, non-discriminatory, non-judgemental. Let's read it again, vv34-35... But hang on! She put a full stop after 'accepts men from every nation'. Doesn't the verse goes on to say 'who fear him and do what is right'. So in fact the Bible verse does *not* say that God accepts everyone, whatever their life-style. He *does* accept people from every nation, ie Gentiles as well as Jews, *but*, and it's a very big but which our Moderator conveniently missed out, *but* God accepts only those 'who fear him and do what is right'. That is a mighty big qualifier! So in fact this verse says the exact opposite of what the Moderator wanted it to say. God does *not* accept people who do not fear him, and, unfortunately in our modern society, there are many, many people who do not fear God or acknowledge him. Nor does God accept those people who don't do what is right. And in his Word he has made it pretty clear that lying, cheating, murder, adultery, pride, greed, envy, and, yes, homosexual practice, are not right.

The Moderator was very wrong to doctor the Bible text to

make it mean the opposite of what it was plainly saying; she was very wrong to mislead the people from God's Word, and to give a false picture of God as trendy, all-inclusive, non-judgemental. That is *not* the God of the Bible.

Why is this so important? It's vital that we come to know the true God, the God as revealed in the Bible and through Jesus Christ, and *not* the God we would *like* to exist. That is an idol, a false god who suits our needs. We live in a society today which is being destroyed by a killer virus called non-judgementalism. When someone says to me, 'Don't be judgemental', what they are *really* saying is, 'Don't make me feel bad about the way I'm living my life'. I'm afraid that poor Baby P died horribly because of this stupid and dangerous non-judgementalism. All the evidence points to the fact that children do better in every way when brought up with their two biological parents. Now I know there are exceptions to all this, but generally speaking, that is the case. But ever since the 1960s we have seen all manner of 'alternative life-styles' promoted, which have chipped away at marriage and the basic family unit. The more they are promoted, the more our society falls apart, and yet we daren't speak out, because we're too frightened of being called 'judgemental'. In the Baby P case, the professionals were blinded by their deliberate refusal to pass a moral judgement on the life-style of the adults who were supposed to be caring for the child.

So in this crazy anything-goes non-judgemental world where no-one's ever wrong, a child is tortured to death, and not one of the 28 professionals involved is to blame. Why

*should* they be, if there's no such thing as right and wrong? And why shouldn't those adults kill Baby P if there's no right and wrong? We're *tolerant*. Who are you to *judge*?

But let me tell you an inconvenient truth. If our society thinks that *God* is a reflection of this easy-going, value-free tolerance of everything, they are in for a terrific shock. From page one of the Bible to the very end, God is revealed as a very *intolerant* God and he is most certainly judgemental. In fact he is *The Judge* of all. He was intolerant of the worship of Baal, of the child-sacrificing Canaanite worshippers of Moloch. He is intolerant of the world's oppressors, bullies, murderers, liars, cheats, swaggerers. He is angry, very, very angry at what these awful people did to Baby P. And do you know what? I'm glad that he is angry. I'm glad that he is intolerant of such evil. I'm even glad that he is intolerant of my own personal sin. I'm glad that he is a *righteous* God.

God accepts those from every country who fear him *and* who do what is right. Do *I* do what is right? Sometimes, sometimes not. So what chance do *I* have? I'm a sinner like everyone else. I praise the righteous God for being utterly intolerant of human sin, but I *also* praise him that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to take my punishment on his shoulders at Calvary's Cross for me, and for the sin of the whole world. The awful Cross shews how incredibly seriously God takes our sin. One day Baby P's killers will face the Judge of all, but then, so shall I, for I am a sinner too. Over the entrance to God's holy presence is the simple word '*repentance*', for the price has been paid by God himself through his crucified Son.