

9. Fighting the Good Fight

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In 1974 Dr. Schaeffer addressed the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization and declared that the church today must emphasize Christian holiness, purity of life, and purity of doctrine. Christians must realize the reality of God and the supernatural in the midst of this present life, and this cannot be forgotten as they try to do evangelism. "Evangelism that does not lead to purity of life and purity of doctrine is just as faulty and incomplete as an orthodoxy which does not lead to a concern for, and communication with, the lost." 1.

Dr. Schaeffer taught that the inerrancy of Scripture is the watershed issue for Bible-believing churches. The watershed is that place where water runs off the mountain and then goes down one side or the other. Churches either move toward God or away from God based upon affirming or denying that the Bible is true in all that it affirms, including the areas where it touches history. If you remember that believing the Bible is true is the first step to saving faith, then you can see that once the inerrancy of Scripture is given up, disastrous consequences will follow: for one by one the essential Christian doctrines will be questioned and begin to fall in the doubting mind. But if conservative and evangelical churches return to their historic and truly Biblical position on the authority and the inerrancy of Scripture, then what the Apostle Paul wrote would be true in their midst and make them more effective:

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking" (Ephesians 4:14-17).

Dr. Schaeffer emphasized that concern for the purity of the church should not lead to the hatred, bitterness, and unloveliness that had characterized his experiences in the '40's and '50's. He pleaded for truth. But as he always endeavored to speak the truth in love, he called for others to make love their aim as they spoke the truth of God. This cannot be done in the flesh, but only in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit; therefore, Fran built his life and work on prayer in a moment by moment communication with God. And he insisted that all believers should do the same.

Often Fran discussed the problems of Bible-believing Christians who stayed in the liberal denominations in hopes of bearing their witness. 2. He remembered how some Bible-believing Christians, who felt called to leave, treated those who stayed. He emphasized that Bible-believing Christians should not separate from one another, but they should support one another in the truth and love of the Lord. His advice to those struggling about what to do included: "I am not the Holy Spirit. I cannot be the Holy Spirit for anyone. You must pray about these things and seek the Lord's leading. The Holy Spirit can call some to stay in these denominations, and He can call others out." On the other hand, he also added, "I know for myself that I could never have accomplished what I have for the Lord if I had stayed in and had tried to fight the battles from the inside."

When various leaders and pastors from a variety of denominations came to him for advice, he noted that in recent history only one mainline denomination had fought the battle for the Bible in their church and won against the liberals, in some other denominations the battle had yet to be decided. His observations led him to warn that when the denomination's bureaucracy or leadership and the seminaries have been captured by the theological liberals the battle is lost. Liberals always tended to infiltrate, subvert, and take over institutions from the inside. With the possible exception of the World Council of Churches, he observed that liberals have never created a major theological institution (they have always taken them from the Bible-believing Christians).

To help Christians learn that in the battles we face we must always speak the truth in love, he wrote *The Church Before the Watching World*. He cried when he learned that his teachings in that book had helped many Bible-believing Christians maintain fellowship one with another although they might be in different denominations. Dr. Schaeffer believed that if we hold to the essentials of the Christian faith, then we have a large circle of people (who also hold to the essentials) with whom we can cooperate and have fellowship even though they may be in churches of other denominations. Still, he insisted strongly that those who stay in the theologically liberal denominations cannot accommodate the liberals, but must continue to confront them with love in all areas of truth in practice and doctrine.

In 1974, Dr. Schaeffer also began to work on a new project--a project that marked a turning point in the lives of many people. Leaders and teachers in L'Abri began working together on the book and film series, *How Should We Then Live?* Filmed in Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, England, Holland, Belgium, and the United States, the filming took six

months to complete. It has been translated into several languages. The book and film were written in response to Kenneth Clark's book *Civilisation*. Clark was an atheist, though he seemed to believe that Eastern religious thought was the pinnacle of man's religious reaching for spiritual enlightenment. His book took a definite anti-Christian stance, and his film series from the book was aired widely over public television.

Though made without the immense financial backing given *Civilisation*, Dr. Schaeffer's book and film were the best Christian response to Clark and others who taught that Christianity is the enemy of intellectual endeavors and achievements. As Schaeffer's work swept over the whole of Western intellectual life and thought, many realized for the first time that Christianity did have the intellectual answers to the philosophical questions--questions that had been raised on the university level and not solved on the seminary level or in the churches of the day. Many saw that the liberal seminaries left unanswered or refused to address the basic philosophical questions, but the Bible did and the Bible gave the right answers. While watching one of the ten episodes, a theologically liberal pastor was converted to Bible-believing Christianity and said afterwards, "Now all the pieces fit together! My Christian faith used to be just a jumble of puzzle pieces, of truths and errors that did not fit together with the world as it is. For the first time I can see the beautiful picture of Christian truth. The puzzle has been put together, I see how everything fits!" 3.

How Should We Then Live? showed what Dr. Schaeffer struggled with in all of his books: "To make a reality day by day of the lordship of Christ in the whole of life, in the area of culture as well as all else . . . to broaden the reality of honestly exhibiting the lordship of Christ in regard to social issues and political life, medicine (human life), and government." 4. For this reason, and because of the scope of his works, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* is subtitled *A Christian Worldview*. In 1982, Schaeffer completely revised his books and added new appendices to some. His *Complete Works* show not only the full scope of his learning but also why he was able to give to the world a new respect for the names "fundamentalist" or "evangelical." By the time *The Complete Works* was completed, however, evangelicalism's teachings were in such disarray and some of them so anti-biblical that Fran chose to call himself a "Bible-believing Christian," and talk about "Bible-believing Christianity," but as one person remarked, "Can there really be any other kind of Christianity?"

The intellectual integrity of Bible-believing Christianity really began to make an impact upon the masses and sweep across the American continent when the Schaeffers led the first seminar for the film series *How Should We Then Live?* in January 1977, with 5,500 people attending. But Satan retaliated against them, and L'Abri felt his flaming arrows. During the seminars, Edith's father died. Hans Rookmaaker, who had worked so hard on the film series, also died unexpectedly. The chapel in Huémoz burned and its beautiful organ was almost destroyed. It appeared that Satan intended to attack the Schaeffers from many sides all at once. But what Satan meant for evil, God turned to good. Fran and Edith were well aware of how Satan's sharp arrows could inflict much suffering, and Edith has said, "Satan so often attacks in ways which the Lord turns into something powerful in counterattack" 5. Satan did not want *How Should We Then Live?* to have an impact on his kingdom of darkness. But with every attack from Satan, the Schaeffers and L'Abri demonstrated the truth of their teachings in life and gave their teachings even more credibility. They proved, even as Job proved, that believers in God will not forsake Him and run in the midst of Satanic persecution. They proved the value and strength of Biblical faith in times of persecution. They intensified their efforts on God's behalf, and began to attack Satan's kingdom on more than one front.

Many answers to prayer sustained the Schaeffers and L'Abri during these very difficult times. God moved some people to send extra money and new workers volunteered their efforts. The book and film series had a remarkable effect upon Western culture and Christian leaders in various governments around the world. From a historical perspective, *How Should We Then Live?* warned the churches and Western governments of coming dangers and Dr. Schaeffer became one of the "watchmen who saw the sword coming and blew the trumpet" (see Ezekiel 33:1-19). He did so by using the best medium that he could use, a contemporary film series.

As Dr. Schaeffer rested from writing his book, filming the series, and conducting a seminar tour, he heard of Dr. C. Everett Koop's series of meetings at Swiss L'Abri. He became convinced that he and Dr. Koop should write a book and do a film, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* This film series on abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia rocked the Western world and brought vehement protests and even death threats to the Schaeffers. Others praised their efforts, including President Ronald Reagan and some in the English Parliament, for awakening the Protestant conscience to the central moral issue of the time. Dr. Schaeffer brought a new biblical and intellectual integrity to Christian social involvement.

Many viewers expressed amazement as the film spoke of the possibility of infanticide "in the future." But at the film seminars, time and again, clergy and medical people testified about children being starved to death recently in nearby hospitals. Some children were starved on purpose simply because their handicap would inconvenience their parents as they grew. Some children only needed minor surgery, that a "normal" baby would have received. Seminar participants learned from each other. Many expressed shock upon hearing about some doctors and ministers who had worked together and counseled parents to let their babies with Down Syndrome starve to death in the hospital, rather than correct an intestinal blockage. Regarding the treatment of the elderly, some ministers testified they had been present when doctors said bluntly, "Society has a concern here," as they pressured families to decide to terminate the feeding of their loved ones. These ministers struggled to overcome the devastating effects of such "medical advice" upon the family. In the film series, Dr. Schaeffer predicted that if people do not turn back to faith in Jesus Christ and live on a Biblical

basis, then we will face doctor assisted suicide and the elimination of anyone who has problems or pain or seems "unfit to live."

The film series raised issues that Christians and others needed to discuss. Some evangelical churches didn't want to disrupt their evangelical programs or "rock their boats," and so they tried to ignore the issues that Dr. Schaeffer and Dr. C. Everett Koop, later U.S. Surgeon General, made in the films. Many others, however, did listen. Perhaps millions more will listen to the call to save lives and to change laws in those countries that allow the civil rights of unborn children to be violated by their mothers who have abortions by doctors who murder children for hire. Abortion in America is a multimillion-dollar business, with 476 abortions being performed for every 1,000 live births. Powerful forces work to continue these brutal murders. In the eyes of God, abortion is murder and a violation of the Ten Commandments and the Law of Love. Under the guise of population control, some abortion advocates even argue that to preserve the human race we need to kill as many of our unborn children as possible. No wonder the film asks, *Whatever Happened To The Human Race?*

During 1977, when satanic attacks seemed to be at their height and a new project to save humanity had begun, Edith Schaeffer wrote the book *Affliction*. Perhaps her most important book, she finished it by October 2, 1977. One year later, the Schaeffers traveled to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Here they learned that Dr. Schaeffer had an advanced case of cancer called lymphoma. Some doctors thought he had only six weeks to six months to live. Edith believed that God inspired her to write *Affliction* and gave it to them as well as to others to help sustain them over the years ahead. Many pastors and counselors found in her book real answers for afflicted, sick, and dying people. *Affliction* gave needed answers from a whole Biblical perspective, rather than a fragmented, non-Christian perspective. It has blessed many who have needed to read a Biblical interpretation of their own personal suffering.

When fighting for truth, Biblical values, sound doctrine, true faith in Jesus Christ, holiness and love, the lives of others and his own life, Fran intended to obey these commands of the Apostle Paul: "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12). And whenever he looked toward the close of his life, he wanted to be able to say, along with Paul: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

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