



WHERE ARE THE OTHERS – THE BACK-UPS, THE SUPPORTERS, THE WORKERS, THE DEFENDERS, THE CARRIERS OF THE CROSS?

by Gerald Cowan

*All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.*

Caesar, though he was a great propagandist for Rome, gave us a great story in his *Gallic Wars, Volume 6*. In an attempted beachhead from which to invade England his troops were stymied by the defensive push-back of the British. Finally the Roman standard-bearer, carrying the flag and symbol of Rome, made his way to a hillside behind the British lines, planted it there and then shouted to the Roman troops to rally around the flag and not let it be captured. Apparently not asking himself, "What if they don't do it?" he stood resolutely in his place and they did respond by surging through the British lines and went on to subjugate much of Britain to Rome. Great story, isn't it? Is there an application for us, the church of the Lord? Of course there is, otherwise I wouldn't be mentioning it here. We sing an old (1887) hymn that says,

"There's a royal banner given for display by the soldiers of the king.
As an ensign fair we lift it up today while as ransomed ones we sing . . .
marching on, 'neath the banner of the cross."

We can segue to another old song, "Where could I go but to the Lord?"

JESUS WAS AND IS THE GREAT STANDARD-BEARER FOR CHRISTIANS AND THE EVANGELIZING CHURCH.

He was and is the light of the world (**John 8:12, Rom. 1:4**). The apostles were also designated lights, cross-bearers planting the gospel (**Mt. 5:14-16**). The church, each congregation and each member of it, is to be across-bearer, taking the light into the world. Jesus was and is the great Standard-Bearer for the evangelizing church. The apostles could also be called standard-bearers or cross-carriers. So can each faithful Christian can be a cross-carrier, a truth-planter, taking the light into the world and shining like lights in the world (**Eph. 5:8, Phil. 2:15-16**). We take up the cross and follow Jesus (**Mt. 10:38**).

Jesus said if he were lifted up in the world, not only on a cross but also in the hearts and lives of people in the world he would draw all men to himself and to God and the gospel; God would draw all men to Himself through Christ. God sent Christ for that very purpose – to seek and save and bring to Him all who will believe and obey (**Luke 19:10, John 6:44-45, 63, John 12:32, Col. 1:21-24**). Many followers of Jesus left him when he preached such things about God, about himself, about his message, about his mission and intention to send others into the world to lift him up and draw all men to God through him. Jesus then asked the twelve apostles if they would also go away from him. Peter, speaking for all of them, said, "Where would (or

could) we go? We believe you are the Holy One of God and that you have the words of eternal life" (**John 6:67-69**).

HOW WOULD WE ANSWER AS TO WHETHER WE WANTED TO LEAVE JESUS?

Where could or would we go, if not to Jesus, not to God through him? Would we go to false religions and religious groups? To idols that neither hear nor speak, that neither know nor care about anything (**Psalm 135:15-18, Isaiah 44:9**). What is the point of asking a rock or a carved stick or something inlaid with gold and silver what was, what is, what will be, or for help? There is no God but one (**Exodus 20:1-6, 1 Cor. 8:4**).

Shall we look to corrupt and contentious world? Jesus said we will find trouble (but answers or defense from trouble), but he has overcome the world. We can and must overcome the world and all things other than God (**John 16:33, Romans 8:37, 1 John 5:4**).

Shall we turn to science and philosophy? Science is supposed to be truth and knowledge or a search for them. But what passes for science is the search, but often assumptions and wrong answers. In **1 Timothy 6:20** Paul mentions science that is falsely so called (KJV), Change the word to knowledge or truth and it is still true, belief in something not true, claiming to have found answers but the answers are not valid.

Shall we go to the government? The governors are too often propagandizers and indoctrinators, imposing their own will, not necessarily what is right and proper and helpful upon the governed people.

Should we look to the church for answers. With more than forty thousand denominations, splits, splinters, and departures from the truth of God by members who can't get along with others but simply say, "This is the way we do it in our church." One can't accept them all (though some claim we can and must). If we measure ourselves and all others by the scripture we may find that all (including us) are incorrect in some points, that are not yet perfectly restored to the pattern and principles of God.

Can we just look into ourselves, our own assumptions, desires and insights? Is human instinct and prejudice dependable? If you say yes, how will you account for the differences and disparities in the extant churches? The only correct answers are obtained from the words that have come from the mouth and Spirit of God.

THE INDISPUTABLE FACT

Jesus has commissioned each and all of his followers (the faithful church and all faithful members of it) not only to live according his gospel but to go into all the world and make disciples for him teaching everyone to obey what he taught the apostles, his inspired evangelists and messengers, namely the gospel of God (**Mark 16:15-16, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-48, John 20:29-31**). Two questions must be asked. What is the gospel? Who and how is to preach it in all the world? The gospel (EUAGGELION – evangel, good news, message of the Lord) – is not four to six points concerning Jesus. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** is not the sum of the gospel, nor are the so called gospels, the accounts of his birth, life and ministry. ascension to heaven and his present activity there, all that God has said about him in prophecy and other parts of the Biblical record. The good news from God and from Jesus Christ contains every

word that proceeds from the mouth of God (**Mt. 4:10**) and of His messiah/ Christ (**John 10:27-28**), spoken and recorded for us by inspired prophets and other oracles (mouthpieces, mouths through which The Lord spoke). Those same words are to be spoken by modern-day oracles, spokesmen of the Lord (**1 Peter 4:11**). We are not preaching the whole gospel unless we include all parts of it.

What about preaching the gospel message in and to the whole world? In **Matthew 28:18-20** Jesus said to make disciples in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A disciple is, first of all, one who has been taught by or with the words of the Master or Teacher, But a disciple must also be able and ready and willing to teach those same things to others and do it in the name of the teacher, in this case Jesus. It is a collective task, not assigned only to one or a few but to all disciples. In **Mark 16:15-16, 20** Jesus said "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone," Again, this is not a command to one or even to each and every disciple. It would be an impossible task if each one had to do it literally. But here is a more accurate meaning of Jesus words, and it can and does apply to each and all his following disciples. "Going through the world (as you are going about in the world) be preaching the gospel to everyone who will hear it from you." That is certainly doable by each of us. A Sunday School group wanted to march into the audience carrying a cross and singing "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before." But they were not allowed to carry a cross, so they came out singing, "Onward Christians soldiers, marching as to war with the cross of Jesus hid behind the door." Is that the kind of cross-carriers we sometimes are? Should it be so?

WHERE ARE YOU IN REGARD TO JESUS?

It all comes down to that question, doesn't. Are you with him or without him? It can't be both. He said one who is not with him is against him and without him (**Matthew 12:30**). Did you know that Paul said of converted persons that before being joined to Jesus Christ they had no hope and were without God in the world. "Without God (ATHEOI – ATHEISTS) IN THE WORLD. Atheist does not mean one who does not believe in God. It means to be without Him, having no connection or relationship with Him. Yes, atheists are without God if they do not believe, but also if they do not obey Him properly and faithfully. Believing is not enough if it is not accompanied by proper response, repenting, confessing, being baptized and living faithfully until death (**Rev. 2:10** and **14:13**). Are you with God and His Christ or without them and "on your own?"

--- Gerald Cowan, *Personal Periodicals* 815, May 16, 2024