

THE CHRISTIAN IN MODERN SOCIETY



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IN MODERN
SOCIETY

TIMOTHY RUFFIN

THE RUFFIN FAMILY

The Christian in Modern Society
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DEDICATED TO



Our Mother, Betty Ann Ruffin

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FOREWORD

It has been eleven years since my father's passing, and I still encounter believers in my travels who tell me how blessed they were by my father's teaching ministry and how much they miss him. As I hear new stories and testimonies, I am always astounded at the scope of the impact that his ministry made on the lives of so many, and I think to myself that we would all be blessed to remain so highly regarded when our days are done!

My personal experience under the teaching ministry of the late Rev. Dr. Timothy E. Ruffin, Jr. began at the age of 13, in the basement of the Mount Zion Baptist Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My father taught a class for Mount Zion's vacation bible school at that time. He was assigned the junior high school-aged kids, which included me. There was a roomful of us, cramped into a partitioned section of Mount Zion's sweltering basement in July. This could have easily been a recipe for disaster, but my father was very skillful in capturing and holding his students' attention. He presented the task of learning the dispensational divisions of Scripture as a contest, and it was not long before he had us working eagerly to master the subject matter. At the

conclusion of VBS, we left my dad's class armed with the ability to recall the dispensations of Scripture, to provide the scripture references for those divisions, and to give their basic descriptions! My VBS class with him stands to this day as one of my most exciting classroom experiences.

At fifteen I began accompanying my father to the Friday night bible class that he taught at Mount Zion. These weekly classes became known as the New Life Bible Class, and they were open to any and all who had a hunger for the Word of God. My father was famous for chalk talks, by which he carefully presented the major doctrines and unifying themes of Scripture, using all sorts of charts, diagrams, and timelines. His fingers were always covered by chalk dust! He labored faithfully each week to equip his students with a theological framework for understanding and interpreting the whole of God's revelation in the Bible, but he was especially zealous for the New Testament doctrines of salvation and how they were systematically unpacked in the Apostle Paul's epistles. I sat under my father's teaching for roughly four years; and it was through his New Life Bible Class that I gained a foundational knowledge of Scripture, which has served me well through the years. I gained a fair measure of competence and confidence in my independent reading and study of the Scriptures. I feel truly blessed to have acquired such a degree of comfortableness with Scripture relatively early in my Christian walk.

But as I reflect on my years sitting in the New Life Bible Class, I recognize New Life served another important purpose besides that of a source of foundational biblical knowledge. For the up-and-coming generation of its day, New Life served as a beacon of God's light and a spiritual refuge from moral and cultural storms raging in the larger society in the early to mid-seventies. It was not a coincidence that New Life tended to draw, on average, local members of a young generation, coming-of-age. My father's style of teaching was confrontational and engaging, appealing to members of a generation already primed for more dramatic modes of expression. The New Life Bible Class constituted a forceful apologetic answering to a questionable morality taking shape in the sixties and seventies. It served as a moral restrainer for many at that time by raising and insisting upon a standard of holiness. My father was always ready to confront his students with tough-love challenges in Christian living and drew seemingly hard moral lines in the sand. These hard lines were precisely the divine prescription needed at the time to counterbalance the sometimes overwhelming influence of a society in flux. He took a strong, unapologetic doctrinal stand in those days that helped many of his students to navigate the moral perils of their everyday lives.

The Christian in Modern Society presents some of my father's thoughts on a number of social and religious institutions and philosophies formed during the early years of his Christian life. Many

of the observations presented pre-date his service as a deacon and ordination as a minister. They contributed to the shape and character of his teaching ministry and provided the sense of urgency in his message. Some of his conclusions are provocative; but they all invite the reader to more careful consideration of his (or her) personal positions on the major issues swirling in our society today.

Timothy E. Ruffin, III

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These acknowledgements are written to paint a picture according to the events that followed the finding of this book. And, it is in this order, that these accolades are given. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was the sovereign hand of God that led me to this treasured manuscript.

I would always ask my late husband *to write a book*, and had no idea there had been one written. I will never forget how overjoyed I felt when I unexpectedly discovered the manuscript titled, *The Christian in Modern Society*. Ten years after his home going this treasure was revealed. When I shared this information with my family we realized that we must accept the challenge to prepare it for publishing.

It is a blessing to have four sons who are gifted and use their gifts to the glory of God. And so I take this time to thank them for the love and support they gave me throughout the process of getting this manuscript to print.

To Joel and Novetta, thank you for sharing with me the delight of this finding and for the contributions you have made to our effort.

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To Arlene Campbell we thank you for your expression of love. We honor the memory of the late Marlena Settles who was a part of our Prayer Team, and to the late Pastor Bruce W. Hook, of Liberty Baptist Church of Philadelphia who accepted the invitation to participate in the reviews. It is my pleasure to acknowledge Vernon M. Ruffin, brother of the late Pastor Ruffin.

Betty A. Ruffin

PREFACE

In the early morning of September 7, 1998, I struggled to stand on the concrete landing outside of my parent's home in Philadelphia, PA. Tears rained down my face as I saw the mortician's long black station wagon quietly roll around the corner against the clear dark sky. My hero died. My father was gone, and I would never hear his voice again.

My father's life spoke so loudly. His deep passion for God; his sense of justice and equity drove his worldview and was clearly seen and felt in his commitment and love to my mother, brothers, church and the community. It was real, authentic and genuine. No matter the situation, my father always had a word and a view that seemed to put things into perspective and whether you completely agreed with his opinion or not, you left validated, loved and complete.

Now that I am a husband, father and minister of the gospel, I continue to seek a sturdy frame to help explain and address the ills that continue to plague our inner world, families and society as a whole. After looking at the news or hearing about the latest scandal to hit the political or religious world, I would often ask

myself what would Dad say? What words of wisdom or insight would he utter in response to the various challenges and issues that we face.

On the morning of September 12th, 2009, my cell phone rang and it was my mother. I could hear exuberant joy and excitement in her voice. She told me that Dad wrote a book and proceeded to explain how she found the manuscript in our basement. As my mother shared the news, my heart leaped and my mind shook. “Dad was home and he had something to say!”

As I read the manuscript, his voice leaped from the pages and as a potter carefully shapes and molds a piece of clay, Dad lays a sturdy frame against the issues of his day and in laying the frame speaks to our hearts and minds in a profound and stirring way. A word for the Christian in modern society – Dad we hear you.

Joel E. Ruffin, Sr.

PART ONE

THE BATTLE





The war in Vietnam has pricked the hearts of the people. Every group that has designated itself as a spokesman for the rights of man has lifted its voice to condemn the actions of the United States in South Vietnam. The president and people holding high office in our government are met everywhere with protest demonstrations.

The demonstrators demand peace. They accuse America of brutality and imperialistic aggression. They protest our presence in Vietnam. The United Nations, the Council of Churches and countless clergy have taken up the hue and cry for the “Rights of Man.” In cities like Milwaukee and even in Washington, D.C., the clergy are seen at the front of the protesting groups and on the picket lines. Whether they are right or wrong will be discussed and determined later, but the point we wish to make is that the characteristic of this age is the demand for “Man’s Rights.”

The courts of the land have looked into the law books and have reevaluated the law. Unfortunately, they have reevaluated that law in terms of man, and not in terms of God’s will and

intent. God's Word tells us that man fell from the estate in which God had placed him and creation was thrown into chaos as a result. The judges and liberal thinkers of our time want to say that man fell because of his environment. This viewpoint is evident in the statements of modern sociologists who claim that environment is the factor that produces criminals. Crime can be abated if criminals are rehabilitated and educated. Juvenile delinquency can be alleviated by providing jobs and education. These methods may cut the problem for awhile, but they offer no long-term solution.

When the criminal is brought before these judges, he is seen as a victim of society instead of a lawbreaker victimized by inner passions and drives from which only God can save him. "Liberty and Justice for all" is at the expense of the victims. In the name of "Human Rights" habitual criminals are turned loose on the streets to prey upon unsuspecting victims.

Constitutional rights and guarantees have been interpreted to the advantage of the criminal. The Supreme Court has protected the criminal but has done nothing to protect the Word of God. In fact, the court moved to remove the Word of God from schools to protect the ears of sinners.

Man and God have different views about what constitutes a basis for fellowship. Men join together for various reasons. Their reason for joining together is determined by what is in man's heart. If man's motives are good, then he will come together and

fellowship, and the results will be good. If man's heart is pure, we can rest assured that eventually the world will become a better place in which to live. All that we have to do is let the good nature of man show through, and the problems of the world will be solved overnight.

Man-Made Utopia. We have been led to believe that man has within his intelligence and power the ability to bring in some kind of millennium. Man believes he can usher in world peace on the basis of his intelligence, scholarship and scientific progress through organizations such as the United Nations.

The failure of man is evident in the newspaper reports. We are killing one another at a terrific rate. There is something wrong with the plans of man. They just have not worked. Even when the so-called church was involved, the result has been failure. Instead of peace, there has been violence and strife.

War Between God and Satan. The world is the scene of an enormous battle. The war rages between God and Satan. The armies face each other across no-man's land, ready to attack and to deal punishing blows at the first opportunity.

No Innocence. No child born into this world remains innocent of this great conflict. For each child comes into the world with a body, a soul, and a spirit; and his body, soul, and spirit become the battleground of these two great adversaries.

Origin of the War. How did the war start? Why the conflict? Why the battleground? The war began in the Garden of Eden.

The peace of creation and the fellowship between God and man was broken by the disobedience of man.

Satan. Satan came into the Garden of Eden. He induced Adam and Eve to disobey the commandment of God. Adam and Eve succumbed to the suggestion of Satan and through their disobedience death came into the world (Romans 5:12).

Disobedience. Disobedience brought death into the world. Simple unbelief on the part of Adam and Eve turned the paradise of Eden into a prison and a place of judgment. By simply not believing what God said about the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve plunged the world into sin and darkness.

Result of Sin. Not only was man thrown out of Eden for sin and the world placed under a sentence of death, but there was placed between God and man a great partition, a wall, a gulf because of sin. Man's vision had become impaired, his judgment clouded and his mind unable to comprehend the message of God. For even when man received the knowledge that God gave him through nature and conscience, man was unable to worship Him correctly and, in effect, rejected Him (Romans 1:16–32).

Wall Between God and Man. Now there was a wall between God and man. The innocency of man was torn asunder by sin. Man had the responsibility to decide right from wrong. Man gained knowledge but at a terrible price. For now his soul was wracked by the insatiable demand to make the right decision. Man must decide whether to obey God or Satan. One is the Maker and

Creator, the other a liar and imposter. Man had the responsibility to live up to the knowledge that he had gained.

All Subject. And so each child born into the world is born under a sentence of death. Each child born into the world comes with his vision distorted insofar as his ability to see and understand God. And each child comes into the world only to become a battleground for God and Satan.

Satanic Influence. Satan has the advantage because of the flesh. His arguments seem more feasible because we are born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5).

Extent of Battle. But the point that I wish to emphasize is this: man has become the battleground where Satan fights for victory over God. From within and without, the conscience of man is seared by the battle. Man must make a choice. To whom will he commit his soul? Will he submit to God, or Satan? There is Heaven to gain and Hell to shun.

Born into Conflict. Whichever choice man makes, whether it is to do the will of God or to succumb to the will and wiles of Satan, he is automatically a part of the conflict by virtue of his birth.

Soul at Stake. The battle is for the soul. There are no conscientious objectors in this war. One cannot remain neutral. The very nature of our souls at birth places us on Satan's side.

Desire for Fellowship. But God has placed within us a deep desire for fellowship with Himself. And man, though blinded by

sin and a prisoner of the flesh, cannot obtain complete satisfaction until he has come back to God. Even though he is separated from God by sin, man has a deep desire to be reunited.

Satan wants to keep what he has, and God wants to save man from the fate that awaits him if he remains in Satan's grasp.

Desire for Peace. The desire for peace on the part of men does not affect the war. The dope addict may want to throw the dope habit, the alcoholic may want to stop drinking, the prostitute may want to escape prostitution, and the habitual criminal may want to go "straight," but Satan won't let it happen. Satan's object is to keep those bound in prison.

Organized Desire for Peace. The councils of men look for peace. Organizations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations reflect man's desire for world peace. But time and time again these organizations demonstrate how helpless man is to effect change in the conflicts that trouble this world. Hunger, exploitation and disease rob the world of peace despite the councils that men set up. The desire for peace does not affect this war.

No Surrender. Even if one surrenders and dedicates his life to Satan, there is no rest. For Satan demands that his disciples enter the conflict to destroy the forces of God.

Desire for peace and surrender does not exempt one from the conflict. You must enlist in the army of your choice and fight. Satan's aim is to destroy the soul and to thwart the plan of God if he can. God, on the other hand, desires to save man from sin