

Three Dangers for Atheists

There are no atheists in foxholes.” It’s one of those quotes that Christians love to repeat. And, often we share it as if it offered needed validation to our own experience with Jesus. Attributed to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the phrase suggests a clear inference, one in which Christians might take some comfort. What it says to the faithful is, when the going gets tough, even atheists turn to God. But is it true that when given sufficient hardships, those professing not to believe in God seek His help in times of trouble?

Atheism is on the increase in the United States. Between 2007 and 2014 the number of atheists in the country nearly doubled. A report from the Pew Research Center indicates that of the slightly more than 326.4 million citizens in the nation, 3.1% of those living among us, roughly 10.1 million, claim to be atheists.

Most dictionaries define an atheist as someone who does not believe in the existence of God. This leads us into a compound conundrum in our consideration of the response of atheists to life’s problems. The Pew report shares that 8 percent of professed atheists have also expressed a belief in God. Further complicating the picture is data indicating that 9 percent of Americans today deny that God exists, even as they shun the atheist label. Meanwhile, a significant number of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews are reported to have indicated that they do not believe God exists. Clearly, it is not an issue that can be neatly packaged.

Troubling Responses

The Pew research is very telling when it comes to the viewpoints of atheists. Ninety percent of atheists say that religion holds no importance in their lives. Very nearly all atheists (97%) say that “seldom” and “never” are two words that describe their prayer life. And, fully two-thirds of professed atheists report that very rarely, and almost never, do they share their opinions regarding religion with religious people. Not too surprising is the finding that when faced with questions of morality (right vs. wrong), 99 percent of atheists say they do not seek guidance from religion. On questions of right and wrong, nearly one third of atheists said science is their primary source of guidance. Meanwhile, the primary sources of direction on ethical matters for 44 percent of atheists were “practical experience and common sense.” Based on the findings of the Pew Research Center, there may indeed be atheists in foxholes. But, so what? Why should that matter?

For those called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9), there is the matter of a responsibility before God of fulfilling the “Great Commission.” Having been delivered from the bondage to sin, the redeemed have an obligation to help others become liberated, too. So, concern for atheists is fueled by Christian love. Such concern is anchored in three clear dangers for atheists:

- 1. The danger of trying to live life without learning and doing the will of God.** Psalm 14:1 tells us, “The fool has said in his heart there is no God.” A lack of belief in God leads to a total disregard for God’s Word, the Bible, where we find the revealed will of God which offers instruction for victorious living.
- 2. The danger of not believing God exists.** Hebrews 11:6 informs us that

“Anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists.” Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Where there is no belief in God, there will be no faith. Where there is no faith, one will not know God.

3. **The danger of shutting God out of our thoughts.** Psalm 10:4 offers this admonition: “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.” Atheism through its rejection of the reality of God will rely upon the sciences of men, or worse yet, personal experience and common sense to guide in matters of morals, ethics, and ultimately salvation. Lord help us all when this becomes the case.

Life’s trials may never drive an atheist into the proverbial foxhole, where at last they will call upon the Lord. That’s why Christians have been commissioned as witnesses of the mercies and grace of God. To tell others of God’s faithfulness is the responsibility of every born-again child of God. Even in those relationships where others declare they don’t want to hear about God, the Lord Himself will provide opportunities for us to testify of His goodness to us.

Atheists believe their course of action is correct. However, it’s imperative that counsels of the wise man be remembered from Proverbs 14:12: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

Those who deny the reality of God walk among us, and with us. And, while their praise of God may be silent, because our desire, like His, is to see them in the kingdom, our testimonies of Him must not be silent.