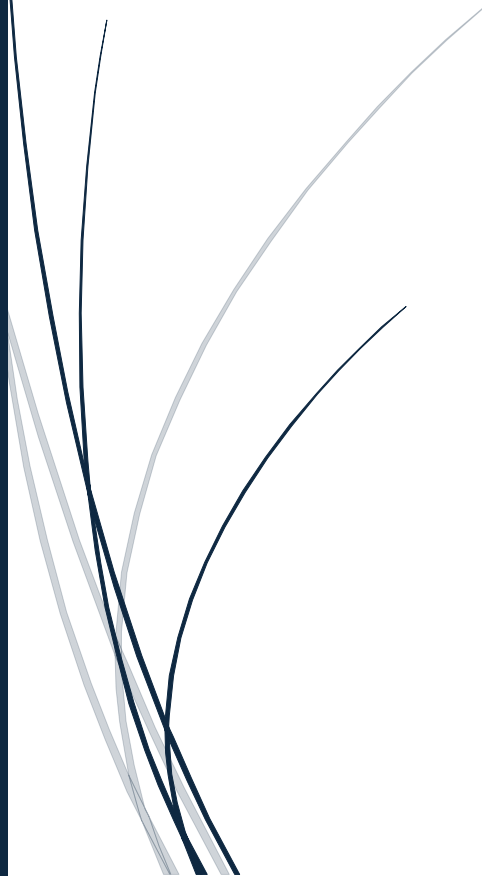


Spring 2025

The Gospel Gleaner

For the Lord, His Word, and His Church



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THE GOSPEL GLEANER

The first issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* was published in the spring of 1985. Much has changed in the world since then, but the mission and values of the *Gleaner* remain the same. Through the medium of electronic subscriptions, the *Gospel Gleaner* is more accessible than ever. Past issues can also be found on our website: www.gospelgleaner.com.

Manuscripts to be considered can be emailed to the editor at:
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God's Work in Depression

Billy Lambert

Depression has a unique darkness that imprisons its victims. One who experiences it might wonder if the light will come. If you are praying for help, then do not lose heart, because help will come. "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2).

The Bible does not speak directly about depression. It does, however, provide examples from real people and their internal battles. Here are a few people in the Bible to whom you can look for hope during seasons of depression.

Solomon

History remembers Solomon as the wisest man to walk the earth, but he learned that with knowledge comes grief. You can learn a lot from the teacher who constantly reminds you that everything is meaningless. "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Solomon gives believers a great vantage point. He can show you how to deal with depression as a Christian. In the twelve chapters of Ecclesiastes, Solomon walks you through a rigorous list of everything he believes is meaningless. He mentions wealth, pleasure, work, and even wisdom itself. He wants the reader to understand one crucial point: He "tried it all."

Those who struggle with depression often ask themselves, "What is the point?" You might run through the best possible scenario of how your life could turn out. However, you come full

circle to the same hopeless thought: It is meaningless. Ecclesiastes is so crucial. Solomon has been there, and he has done everything he wanted to do. He experienced the most pleasurable things he could find. He acquired vineyard after vineyard and gained the whole world you might say, but for him, it was not enough.

Solomon concludes in poet-like fashion. He builds up for twelve chapters and places the key to his hope in the last verses, Ecclesiastes 12:13. He tells his readers to fear God and keep God's commandments. He realizes that life does not always make sense. He understands that sometimes wickedness prevails, and the needy are forgotten. Yet he ends on a strong note, telling you to "fear God." He reminds you that God is near. Through all the confusion, doubts, and dark days, God is there. Solomon points you to Christ, who in Matthew 11:29-30 says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

David

King David is known as a man after God's own heart. He slew a giant, conquered armies, and led the nation of Israel. Yet David was humble enough to write about his innermost struggles. Psalm chapter 13 gives insight into his turmoil. He writes verses like, "How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?"

David was a mighty warrior, but the battles in his heart proved the ugliest. If you read through the Psalms, then you will find how David coped with the chaos in his soul. He continually drew

near to the Lord and cried out for help. "Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord I have no good apart from you" (Psalm 13:2).

Paul

The New Testament has a different literary style from the Old Testament. However, you find words of encouragement speckled throughout it. Many of the writers encourage their readers to bring to light their hardships. They call the church to pray for one another and carry one another burdens.

Paul gives you a glimpse into his heart in 2 Corinthians. Paul may not have suffered from depression, but he struggled with something that tormented him. He writes, "Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded

with the Lord to take it away from me" (2 Cor. 7:7-9).

Paul reveals the heart of God in the following verse. Paul shows Christians how they can handle the weight of depression. "But [God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

God assures you that even if you begin to break, his grace will sustain you. As fierce as the storm in your soul might rage, you have a King who can say "cease," and the storm will quite.

God can use your weakness for his glory. Paul reminds the Church that sometimes God will not withhold dark days from his children, but he will light the path through them.

Before I Formed You in the Womb

Andy Erwin

In Jeremiah 1:5 a reference is made to Jeremiah's existence prior to his physical birth, i.e., "in the belly" and coming forth "out the womb." The Lord recognized that Jeremiah was a living being while in his mother's belly. The Lord also had a plan for Jeremiah. Jeremiah was sanctified (or consecrated) before his birth into the world. He was ordained (or appointed) as a prophet for the Lord unto the nations.

Sanctified and Ordained

Before offering any comments on this verse, let us verse define the terms *sanctified* and *ordained*. What did the Lord mean when He said He had sanctified and ordained Jeremiah before birth?

The reader will find a close association between these terms. To "sanctify" means to appoint, consecrate, dedicate, make holy, and prepare. As always, the context must be considered foremost before one assigns any definition. Likewise, to "ordain" is to appoint, ascribe, assign, bestow, charge, and commit.

Knowing that the Lord can look down through the corridor of time and call that which is not as though it was (cf. Romans 4:17), he could see the world into which Jeremiah would be born. He could see the need for such a prophet. Moreover, He could see the need for such a message as He gave to Jeremiah.

God thus *prepared* Jeremiah for this appointed work in the sense that he was born near Jerusalem. He was also born into a faithful priestly family. And evidently, he had friends in high places. Keesee writes:

“Jeremiah had friends in high places, for the kings of Judah and officials from Babylon often showed him respect. His uncles (32:7) and the husband of Huldah the prophetess (2 Kings 22:14) were both names Shallum. If these two Shallums were the same person, Jeremiah is again linked with relatives who were most influential during the time of Josiah’s reform. Therefore, whether or not Jeremiah’s father was high priest, it is evident that the prophet was part of a prominent family in Judah.”¹

Having this kind of family and opportunity to influence others, we can see how God was preparing the way for Jeremiah before he ever came into the world. He was ordained in the sense that God had *assigned* to him this special prophetic ministry.

Freewill

Even though God had great plans for Jeremiah, the prophet still had the responsibility of obeying God’s will for this and assignment in his life. Simply observe the various commandments God gave to Jeremiah to preach His word faithfully in the context of chapter one. For example, notice Jeremiah’s reply: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth” (v.6).

Implied in his reply is freedom of choice. The fact that God had plans for Jeremiah and had prepared for these plans to be fulfilled, did not violate the prophet’s freewill.

With his reply, Jeremiah reminds the reader a little of Moses (cf. Exodus 3:11; 4:10). Indeed,

Jeremiah was a young man when God first spoke to him. However, God has used young and old alike to accomplish His purposes in this world. God does not judge people as we judge them. He looks on the heart (cf. 1 Samuel 16:7).

The Lord was going to send this young prophet where He wanted him to go and give him the message which He wanted him to preach. Naturally, Jeremiah would have his critics and detractors. He was a young man with a powerful message to condemn the sins of the people. Such a combination does not win a lot of popularity contests.

Undoubtedly, Jeremiah would encounter his share of ugly faces and sore displeasure. Yet God promised, “I am with you to deliver you” (v. 8). God has made this same promise to His church as we preach the gospel (cf. Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 13:5-6).

Commissioned as a Prophet

“Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth...” (vv.9-10). Such a statement is not intended to be taken literally, but figuratively. With this figure of speech Jeremiah was illustrating the mechanics of inspiration as the Holy Spirit gave him utterance.

He could not speak until he was touched by the hand of God and inspired to preach. His preaching would ultimately involve building and planting. But, before Jeremiah could build and plant, he had to root out, pull down, destroy, and throw down (v.10). Before a new building could be constructed, the old one had to be demolished.

The Lord was teaching Jeremiah (and the readers) how a true reformation or conversion occurs. The old must first be destroyed, and *then*

¹ Dayton Keesee, *Jeremiah 1-25*, Truth for Today Commentary (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2011), 116-117.

the new must be planted and built. Before Gideon could build an altar to the Lord, he had to destroy the altar of Baal (Judges 6:25-26). Paul teaches Christians this principle in Romans 6. The old man must be destroyed for the new man to live.

Jeremiah was commissioned to go into the midst of this perverse and wicked nation and speak the words of condemnation and judgment which almighty God had against them. This was no easy task, and it would not require an easy-going individual. Jeremiah was thus instructed: (1) gird up thy loins (get ready for a battle); (2) arise and speak; and (3) be not dismayed.

Speak what, Lord? God said, "The words that I command you." Nothing else would/will do in such situations.

Speak to whom, Lord? God said, "...against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, and the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land."

Be not dismayed? How, Lord? God said, "I have made you a fortified city (I will protect you) ...they shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail...I am with you, to deliver you" (vv. 17-19).

A Final Thought

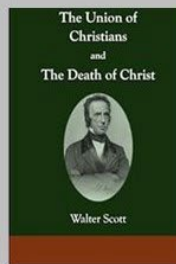
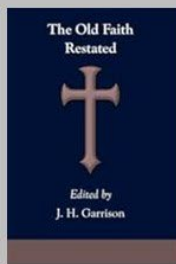
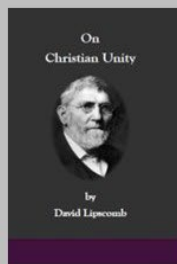
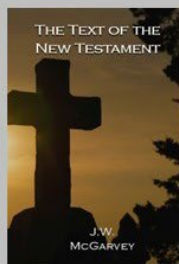
Let us remember that God has made this same promise to each of us as we are commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature. He is with us every step of the way. He will never leave or forsake us. Truly, if God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31).

Before any of us were formed in the womb, God had an eternal purpose to save mankind. We are blessed as Christians to take part in this purpose. God can use our life experiences and settings to accomplish His will to save the lost. But, as with Jeremiah, we must be faithful to His charge.

At times, the Lord's message may seem unpleasant to the person hearing it. The messenger of the Lord may receive persecution as a result. Yet, fear not, for the Lord is with you and will reward you for standing faithfully as a good soldier of Christ, in the spirit of Jeremiah and all of God's faithful messengers who have gone on before.

At such times, consider the words of one of our most beloved hymns, "Must Jesus bear His cross alone, and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me."

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The Rest of Restoration: The Continuation of New Testament Christianity

Joshua Seth Houston

F. LaGard Smith's book *Radical Restoration* asks the question that has long plagued those in the Stone-Campbell movement: "Will the church ever be truly restored?"¹

The question as it is posed is left open-ended to be answered by a plethora of responses. On one extreme some would suggest that the New Testament church is already fully restored; therefore, those within its grasp are incapable of misunderstanding or misapplying Scripture. However, the other extreme suggests that the New Testament church can never be fully restored because modern Christians are so far removed from the context of the first century. Thus, there is no way for modern believers to interpret the Bible in the same way as the early church.

Restoration is misunderstood as something to be accomplished rather than as a process. So, how can the church continue forward under the banner of the restoration plea? Three suggestions are presented here: (1) Christians must remember that there is only one church, (2) Christians must allow the original context to dictate interpretation, and (3) Christians must understand that restoration begins with the whole, not the part.

There Is Only One Church

There is one God, one body, one faith, one baptism, one savior, and one gospel (cf., Eph 4:1-6). Paul especially emphasizes the number "one" as it pertains to the body of Christ, i.e., the

ekklesia (assembly, church). Paul understood that division kills the body of Christ. Paul also understood unity to be something more than the act of simply being together. Unity involves being of the same mind and of the same heart (Phil 2:1-2).

Even today, the church is divided because some believe that worship and Bible interpretation should reflect their own ideals and personal desires. Thus, the mentality is "If I don't like it, I'll just leave." This certainly is not the picture of unity that Paul or Jesus had in mind.

For example, Paul makes the point that a body is composed of different parts that work together to create a functioning organism. In other words, if each part does not come together alongside the other parts of the body, the body cannot exist.

Additionally, parts of the body that only take without giving are cancerous. The best bodies are healthy and well-functioning. Paul states in Rom 12:4-5, "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

Paul offers an extended commentary on this idea in 1 Cor 12:12-31 where he notes that once one has entered the body of Christ (cf., Gal 3:27), one holds a necessary function within the body. This forcefully implies that no member is useless or worthless to the church. As part of this body, each individual has certain roles that allow the body to function at its fullest potential.

¹ F. LaGard Smith, *Radical Restoration: A Call for Pure and Simple Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Cotswold Publishing, 2001), 7-13.

While the body is composed of many members, there remains still one body. After Peter's great confession in Matt 16:16, Jesus said, "You are Peter and, on this rock, I will build my church" (Matt 16:18). It was never Jesus's intention to build a plurality of churches. It was never his intention for the church to be divided. Even the word "denominate" from which we get the common religious descriptor "denomination" means "to divide." Division kills the body of Christ.

Context Dictates the Interpretation

Restoration can only occur if the Word of God is the ultimate authority. Unfortunately, this causes a problem within the body of Christ. On the one hand, some live by the mantra, "The Bible said it. That settles it." Still, others suggest, "Those things happened so long ago. They have no bearing on the life and practice of the church today." But there is a way to properly blend these two ideologies into a proper method of interpretation and application.

In his discussion with Kyle Pope at Freed-Hardeman University, Dickson Campus, Doug Burleson (Professor of Bible at Freed-Hardeman University) suggested the best way to interpret Scripture is to first interpret it as the original audience would have interpreted it.²

To be sure, this is the basic practice of biblical hermeneutics. For those in restoration circles, biblical interpretation has long rested on, as Smith suggests, "book, chapter, and verse" which may be better understood as "command, example, and necessary inference," though Smith

suggests a new hermeneutic of "purpose, principle, and precedent."³

The hermeneutical issue then is not necessarily *what* the Bible says but *why* the Bible says it. For the church to continue its restorative process, the church must be willing to study the Bible based on its original meaning. A text can never mean what it never meant. By evaluating the literary intent, historical situation, and theological insight of the passage, interpreters will be better equipped to "rightly handle the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).

Restoration Begins with the Whole, Not the Part

God always demands complete obedience from his people.⁴ As such, restoration must begin with obedience, and obedience must begin with the masses. Whole congregations must decide to unite as the body of Christ, interpret Scripture based on an appropriate hermeneutic, and operate as a unified group rather than individualistically.

The earliest Christians understood themselves to be members of the church that Christ built.⁵ "The church" is always singular in the New Testament.⁶ Though the one body is indeed made up of many members (cf., 1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12), the body cannot function without the brain. Thus, Jesus's position as the head of his church (Col 1:18) indicates that Jesus is the ultimate authority. The body cannot deviate from what the brain commands. Any departure from this standard cannot be supplemental to the body. A deviation from the brain is a disability, a handicap to the church.

² This discussion can be found at:

https://vimeo.com/374021199?fbclid=IwAR30D4IiHowzrU-5kzhj7hY2t87Q6RhZKGAaN4NcROzd2oezE5I_WtICaHk.

³ F. LaGard Smith, *The Cultural Church: Winds of Change and the Call for a New Hermeneutic* (Nashville, TN: 21st Century Christian, 1992), 47–59.

⁴ Dan Chambers, *Churches in the Shape of Scripture: Churches of Christ and the Quest to Be More than Just Another Evangelical Church* (Franklin, TN: FaithWorks Press, 2012), 19.

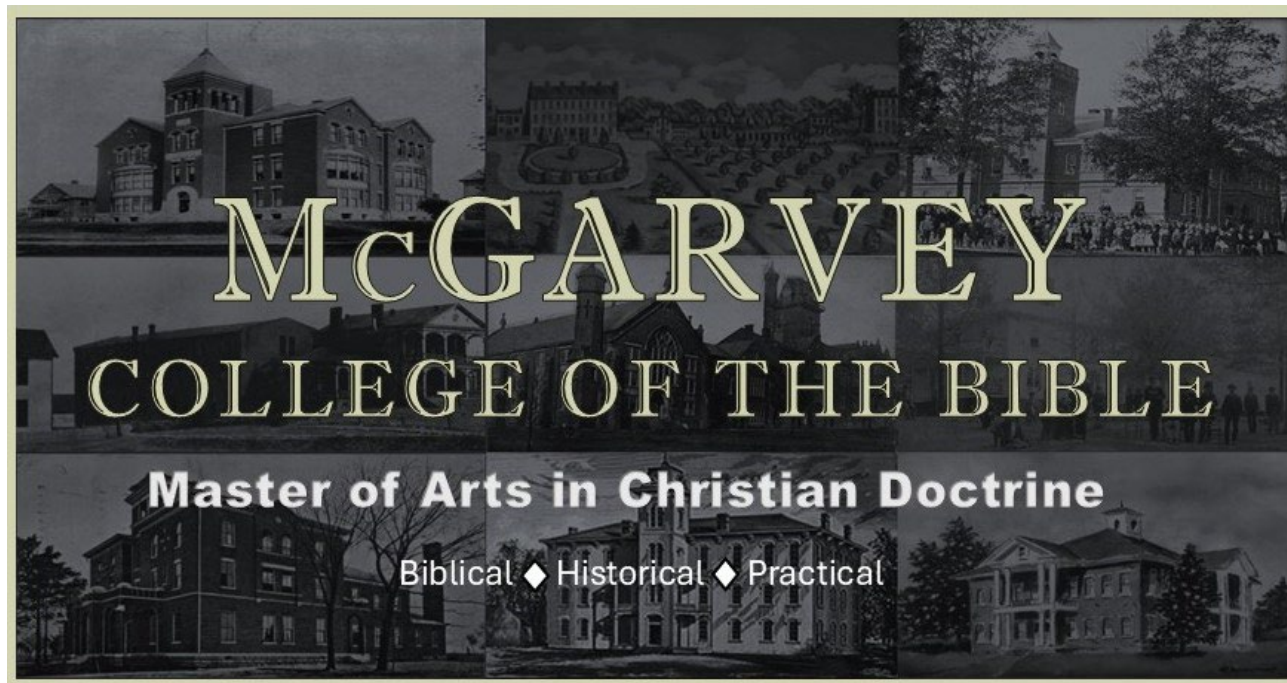
⁵ Chambers, *Churches in the Shape of Scripture*, 30.

⁶ Roy Cogdill, *The New Testament Church* (Lufkin, TX: The Gospel Guardian, 1959), 58.

Conclusion

Restoration did not begin with Alexander Campbell or Barton W. Stone nor will restoration end with the twenty-first century church. Restoration is continuous. Each generation of Christians will have its various challenges both internal and

external. If Christians will remember that restoration requires the one body of Christ to be united, that body to practice proper hermeneutics, and that restoration requires a united mass of Christians, the restoration of the church will continue to thrive throughout generations to come.



Our First Semester of Classes is Underway!

January 13th marked the first day of classes for the McGarvey College of the Bible with courses taught in Kenya and Ghana. Nixon Ocheing is our instructor in Kenya and Joshua Aidoo teaches in Ghana. Both men are graduates of schools of preaching and have been teaching in schools of preaching for several years. Joshua is also the director of the West Coast School of Preaching in Takoradi, Ghana. Johnny Trail and Andy Erwin are also teaching this term in Ghana and Kenya.

Our courses in South Africa also include students from Zimbabwe. Joshua Houston is pictured here teaching his

class. Joshua preaches for the Salem Creek congregation near Murfreesboro and has a Ph.D. in Old Testament studies from Faulkner University. Phillip Hendricks coordinates the program in these countries and teaches for MCOB. Phillip has preached for many years in South Africa and is beloved by the brethren. In addition to offering classes in these four African countries, MCOB is offering online courses in the United States. Jackson Erwin and Andy Erwin are teaching courses in the US this semester.

In all, we have 35 students in four countries. This is a good start for us as we are operating debt free. As our

donations increase, we are confident that our enrollment will too. Currently in Kenya, for example, we have a waiting list of approximately 20 preachers who are eager to enter the program. We believe this will only increase in time through God's grace.

A Blessed Beginning

God has blessed us with an extremely smooth beginning. The preparation and groundwork which He blessed has provided us with a very good first semester. Thanks to our faithful supporters, we are debt free. While we operate on a month-to-month basis, like Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, we have yet to run out of anything we need!

Future Plans

It's exciting to plan the work and work the plan going forward. We are on schedule with all that we hoped to do to this point. Moving forward, we would like to offer more classes in Africa and open more extensions around the world. We will stay in English-speaking countries primarily

due to our digital library consisting of 17,000 works in the English language.

We believe this work can and will continue to grow through God's grace and kindness. Fundraising is a daunting task at times, but it is also a blessing to meet brethren in various places and on occasion preach at a new place. My presentations are more like sermons than fundraising pitches. It's hard not to be passionate about the work we are doing. I would love to come and share the good news of Christ and the good work of MCOB with your congregation.

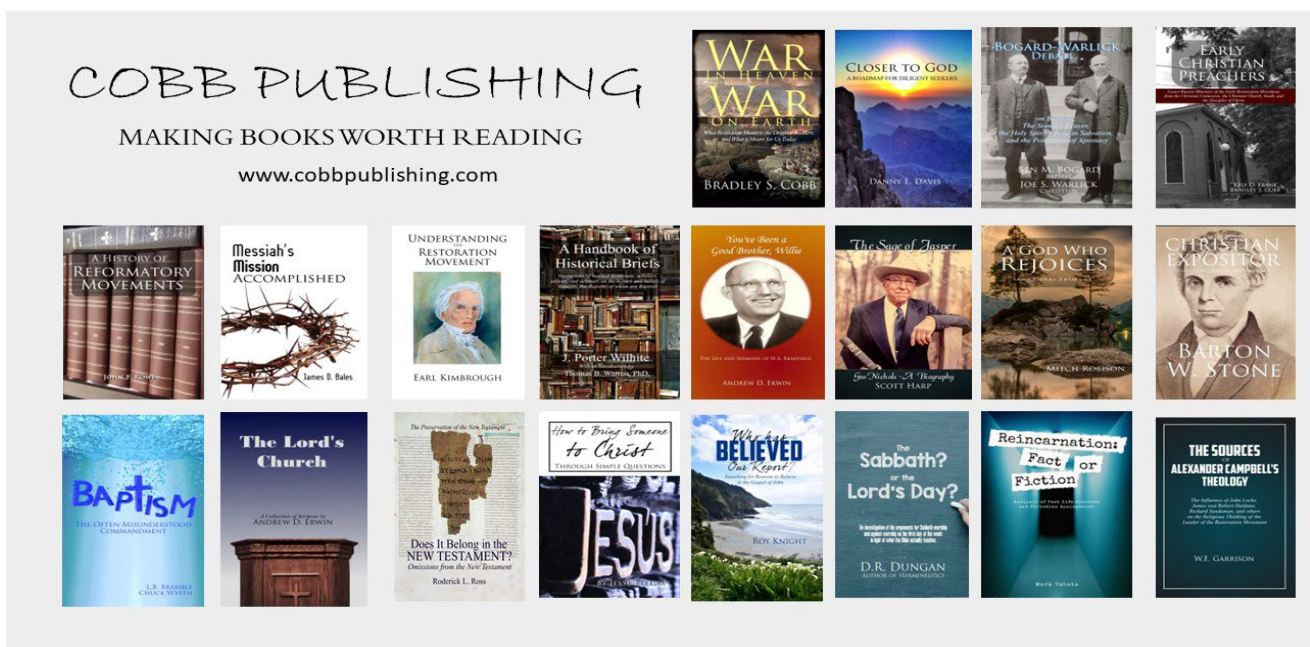
If you believe in this cause, please consider our work. It cannot be done without faithful supporters. You can visit our website for more information (<https://mcgarveycollege.online>) or email me anytime.

Andy Erwin

President

McGarvey College of the Bible

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The Gospel in the Old Testament: A Journey through the Scriptures

Matt Wallin

The gospel, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, is the good news of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The gospel is often thought to be revealed as starting in the New Testament. However, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 says something profound: the Gospel was "according to the scriptures." Since the New Testament scriptures had not been completed, which scripture was being referenced? The Old Testament scriptures! The gospel is not an afterthought introduced by the New Testament writers; rather, it was foretold in the Old Testament. Knowing this allows us to look back and see the gospel from the beginning to the end of the Bible.

The World Before Sin

The story begins in Genesis 1; the Bible opens with the powerful declaration, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). This first chapter of the Bible is not merely an account of creation but also a profound revelation of God's nature. In every verse, God's attributes—His power, knowledge, and sovereignty—are on full display. As we read, we are reminded that God is not only the Creator of the universe but also the One who upholds and sustains all things. Nature can reveal God's glory, but it cannot fully disclose His will or His plan for redemption. While nature shows us God's grandeur, the Bible reveals His mind and will, giving us the understanding that we need.

The creation of humanity is particularly significant. In Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let us make man in our image," which introduces the plural form of God. This mysterious reference to "us" and "our"

is fully understood only in light of the New Testament. The Apostle John, in John 1:1-3, identifies Jesus as the eternal Word who was with God in the beginning; indeed, he was God.

John's Gospel clearly reveals that Jesus, the Word, was the one through whom all things were made. Paul echoes this truth in Colossians 1:16, stating that "by Him [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." This connection between Genesis 1 and the person of Jesus shows that from the very beginning, God's plan for creation included the future revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Fall and the Promise of Redemption

As we move from Genesis 1 to Genesis 3, sin enters, and the world changes forever. Genesis 3 describes the sin of Adam and Eve, including the consequences of sin. In Genesis 3:6, sin entered the world. Genesis 3:8 tells us that sin caused a separation from God. This moment of rebellion, the first sin, shattered the perfect world God had created. From that point onward, sin entered the world and brought with it death, suffering, and separation from God.

Genesis 3:6 marks a turning point in the story of the world. It is a moment that changed everything. Every problem we face, every pain we endure, every drop of blood shed in human history is ultimately the result of this single act of disobedience. The perfect world described in Genesis 1 and 2 was lost.

But amid this tragedy, God gave the first promise of redemption in Genesis 3:15. God declares

to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This verse is the first gospel sermon! It points to a future offspring of the woman who would ultimately defeat Satan and undo the damage caused by sin. This promise is a direct prophecy of Jesus Christ, who, through His death and resurrection, would triumph over sin.

The sin of Genesis 3:6, the separation of Genesis 3:8, and the promise of Genesis 3:15 combined reveal the message of the gospel!

God's Promise to Abraham

As the Old Testament continues, we see God's plan of redemption unfolding through His covenant with Abraham. In Genesis 12:1-3, God promises Abraham that he will become the father of a great nation and that through his offspring, all nations of the earth will be blessed. These promises, while significant in themselves, are ultimately about the coming of Christ. Paul, in Galatians 3:8-16, makes it clear that the promise to Abraham was not merely about physical descendants but about a singular "seed," and that seed is Jesus Christ. Through Christ, all nations are blessed because of the salvation He brings. Galatians 3:8 is especially clear about the gospel message being in the Old Testament when it says, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

In Galatians 4:4, Paul writes, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." This echoes the promise in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would one day come to defeat the serpent. The Gospel, then, is not an afterthought in the New Testament, but a thread

running throughout the entirety of the Old Testament, pointing forward to the coming of Jesus.

The Continuation of God's Promise

As we trace the promises of God through the Old Testament, we see them being passed down from Abraham to his son Isaac, and from Isaac to his son Jacob. Through Jacob's twelve sons, the nation of Israel was born, and God continued to work through this chosen people, preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah. The story of the Old Testament is ultimately about God's faithfulness to His promises and His plan of salvation that would be fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In Matthew 1:1, the Gospel begins with a genealogy: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." This connects Jesus directly to the promises made to Abraham and David, reminding us that the Gospel has always been the solution to the problem of sin. Jesus is the fulfillment of all the hopes and prophecies of the Old Testament. Matthew's genealogy links Jesus to the "seed of the woman" in Genesis 3:15 and the "seed of Abraham" in Genesis 12:3, showing that the Gospel is the culmination of God's redemptive plan.

The Gospel as the Fulfillment of God's Plan

As we look back at the Old Testament, we see the Gospel not as a new concept introduced by Jesus in the New Testament, but as the central theme of God's plan of salvation that has been unfolding since the very beginning. From Genesis 3:15, where the first promise of a Redeemer is made, to the covenant with Abraham, the prophecies in the Psalms, and the writings of the prophets, the Old Testament points forward to the coming of Christ.

The gospel, which Paul defines in 1 Corinthians 15 as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, was not an unexpected development; it was—and still is—the fulfillment of God’s eternal plan. Jesus was always the plan from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

The Gospel in Our Lives Today

The story of the Gospel is the ancient story that still holds the key to our salvation today. The Gospel is God’s answer to the problem of sin. Just as Adam and Eve hid from God after their sin, we also hide from Him in our sin. But just as God provided a way of redemption in Genesis 3:15, He has provided the ultimate solution to our sin in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This is the Gospel—the good news that God has made a way for us to be reconciled to Him.

In the New Testament, when the apostles preached the Gospel, they called people to respond in faith, repentance, and baptism (Acts 2:38). Through baptism, we identify with Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, symbolizing our own spiritual rebirth and the forgiveness of our sins (Romans 6:3-6). This is the same Gospel that

was promised in the Old Testament, and it is the same Gospel that offers us hope and salvation today.

Conclusion

The Gospel is not a new idea that begins in the New Testament. From Genesis 3:15, God has been pointing humanity toward the ultimate solution to the problem of sin—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This Gospel, promised in the Old Testament, has now been fulfilled and is available to all who will respond in faith, repentance, and baptism; to all those who trust and obey.

As we look at the Old Testament, we see that the Gospel is the story of God’s plan for salvation from the beginning of time, and it is the story that continues to unfold in our lives today. The question for us, then, is not whether the Gospel is true, but how we will respond to it. Will we obey the Gospel and rise to walk in newness of life, just as Jesus did in His death, burial, and resurrection? And when we do, will we tell anyone else about it? The choice is ours.

ADMONITION, ADMONISH: A Word Study

Leon Crouch

The noun form of this word is used only three times in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 10:11; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 3:10). The verb form is used eight times (Acts 20:31; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 14; 2 Thessalonians 3:15).

The noun form, *nouthesia*, basically means “instruction,” “warning” or “admonition.” In classical Greek, the word means or refers to a “minding” or “warning” (Liddell-Scott, 1058). In the

Septuagint the word is used with the same meaning (Wi. 16:6).

In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul wrote, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (NASB).

The KJV says, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

In First Corinthians 10:6-10, Paul had given warning about the punishment for sin to keep the Corinthians from following the same path as the people of the Old Testament period. The same warning applies to Christians today if they get involved in the types of activities mentioned in this context.

In Ephesians 6:4, the KJV says, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The NASB has, "And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger: but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." It is the father's responsibility to discipline the children is included in the implications of the "father being the head of the woman, and thus of the family." It should be noticed that the word "fathers" here does not take away the responsibility of mothers to discipline their children as needed, although it would not be appropriate to translate "parents" in this verse, but do note Ephesians 6:1 as "parents" are to be obeyed. The word "admonition" here refers to training and as to how one should live on a daily basis. This includes teaching and warning about the results of wrong actions. The teaching is to be done by word of mouth, by example and by encouragement.

Paul also wrote to his friend and co-worker to "reject a factious man (or "a heretick" KJV) after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:10-11). The word "warning" here is from the same Greek word that is translated "admonition" elsewhere.

The verb form of the word (*noutheteo*) is found in Acts 20:31, where Paul is reported as saying to the Christians in Ephesus, "for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears" (NASB). It should be noted that the

difference between "admonish" and "teach" is that "admonish" has to do with things that are wrong and call for a warning, but "teach" refers basically to imparting information about the truth of God and what He wants His people to practice. This can be done in several ways as is seen in Colossians 3:16.

It seems to me that the word "admonish" can be clearly understood to include teaching people how to live a Christian life. Paul wrote, "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

Paul's concern to admonish every person is something we as God's people should be doing even now. Wherever we live, there are those around us that need to be admonished; that is, they need to be instructed in the Word of God and urged to follow that Word in all of their activities. Paul uses the word again in 1 Corinthians 4:14 to show that each Christian should be encouraging others to be more like God wants them to be.

Paul urges the Christians in Thessalonica to be faithful despite any problems they faced. Note his words in 1 Thessalonians 5:12: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you."

The NASB has the words "give instruction" instead of "admonish" in this verse. In verse 14 of the same chapter, the apostle uses the word as he continues his instruction to the Christians in Thessalonica. He writes, "And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men."

The point seems to be that those who have special problems need special treatment. Those

who were “disorderly” (lit. “out of step” or “out of rank”); the “fainthearted” a word that indicates that they were despondent or discouraged or fearful, and they needed help. The weak here are no doubt those who are weak in their faith, or those who lack courage or spiritual insight. They also need to be admonished. I think it is safe to say that every church has one or more in its membership that needs to be admonished in one or more of these areas.

In 2 Thessalonians, Paul even urges the readers not to regard those who are unfaithful and

who may persecute the faithful Christians as enemies, but they should admonish such a person as a brother (3:15).

If there is one lesson we can learn from this word, it is that we need to be concerned that our fellow Christians remain faithful and we must also be concerned about those who are not in the body of Christ and treat them in a way that they may be receptive to the gospel message. May the Lord help us toward this goal!

The Evidence of Things Not Seen

Guy Hester

Slowly and gingerly a blind man walked down the street tapping and feeling carefully with his white and red cane until he located the curb on the busy street corner where he stopped and waited until he was aware that someone else was also at the same corner.

Carefully, he touched the arm of the person who stood by him and asked, “Would you mind if I accompanied you across the intersection?” “Why no,” replied a woman’s voice, “I’d be delighted.”

He then took her arm, and with traffic roaring through the busy intersection, they stepped from the curb and walked briskly to the other side.

As the blind man was about to thank her, the lady said to him, “Sir you cannot imagine how I, being blind, appreciate your kindness and consideration in helping me across this busy street corner.”

These two people very sincerely had faith in each other, but they did not have sufficient

evidence for that faith. If either of these had known that the other was blind, neither of them would have relied upon the other to get them across the street.

Many people have the same problem religiously. They sincerely place their trust and confidence in a system of religion which they believe with all their hearts will get them to heaven, not knowing that they are following blind leaders. Jesus said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:13-14).

While it is true that “we walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7), there must be sufficient evidence for the faith that saves. Notice how saving faith is defined by the Hebrew writer: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The word of God is the only source of saving faith, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

We have abundant and sufficient evidence to believe the Bible is true, that it is, as it claims to be, the word of God. The Bible has withstood the test of time and never have its enemies been able to destroy its credibility, nor prove one syllable to be untrue. The scriptures are the inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Bible declares the existence of God and that He is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1). We can have an undaunted faith in this because of the abundance of evidence. Truly, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). All about us is the evidence of the Almighty and the creation, but there is no evidence anywhere for the false claims of evolution. Although we cannot "see" God, our faith in Him is not a "blind faith" because we have indisputable evidence.

The same thing is true of the Son of God (John 1:1-5, 14; 5:32-37; 20:30, 31). Since the Bible is true, based upon solid evidence, we can have faith in whatever it teaches. We can have faith in the virgin birth of Christ (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23). We can have faith in His death, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

We can have faith in the fact that:

Editor's Note

The two previous articles were published in the first periodical I attempted to serve as editor, *Searching the Scriptures Quarterly*. Both men have gone to their reward and their works follow them.

Leon Crouch (1928-2019) was a beloved teacher and tremendous student of the scriptures. He was a Marine Corp veteran who became a preacher, missionary, professor, author, and elder in the Lord's church. His grounded approach

- Christ has built but one church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18).
- The gospel can save all who believe and obey (Romans 1:16; Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8-9).
- God will accept worship that is sincerely offered and authorized by the New Testament (John 4:23-24; Colossians 3:17).
- Singing without the use of mechanical instruments of music is acceptable to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).
- Observance of the Lord's Supper as a regular part of the worship every first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
- When Jesus comes those who remained faithful will receive "a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Many are placing their faith in religious organizations that are teaching and practicing things which are contrary to every one of these things which we have mentioned. To do so is to follow blindly the blind leaders which will ultimately fall into the ditch of hell. Our faith must be as God intended, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

to biblical studies helped shape my approach. He was a man who could remain steady and true to the Book in the academic setting regardless of the shifting winds swirling around him.



I was blessed to sit at his feet near the end of his teaching career. He desired to teach and train preachers as long as he could. When many men his age were retired, he was still serving.

Guy Hester (1936-2013) was a beloved minister. A Korean War veteran, Guy followed in his father's footsteps to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ until the time of his death.



I was blessed beyond measure to have Guy in my life. He was more of a father to me than a friend, and he was a dear friend. While I was going through my studies and earning degrees, men like Guy helped to keep my feet on the ground. He was an old-fashioned gospel preacher and never desired to be anything else.

I place before you the impact these men had on my life, especially as a young minister, to serve as a case study. The influence given to young preachers in their growth and study is crucial and must be balanced. It is essential to have faithful teachers who can walk a young man through his academic studies. He must be taught to "eat the fish and throw the bones away." However, it is just as (if not more) important to have faithful gospel preachers as mentors to influence him.

Too many young men are taught the scriptures academically but are lacking in their love for the church and a genuine love for preaching. Some know little about the history of the Lord's church and our legacy of great preachers. Little attention is given to the sermons, debates, and timeless works those men published. Every preacher and aspiring preacher should know that he is standing on the shoulders of giants.

Practically speaking, we find too many questions being asked and going unanswered by preachers and teachers today. Sadly, most of these questions have already been answered and were published in previous generations. The preacher would be better equipped to address doctrinal controversies if his education included a thorough study of the works which contain the answers.

A balanced education requires faithful teachers in the classrooms of school and life. I admire so many of those who can diagram and translate from Hebrew and Greek. I admire anyone who has committed himself to the pursuit of truth and knowledge.

We are not discussing a matter of "either/or." It can be "both." A minister's education can include *both* academic advancement *and* a love for the church, preaching, and the preachers who have gone before him.

Alfred Ellmore (1838-1925), a great gospel preacher as well, once wrote when looking back over his life these memorable words for our consideration:

"I have no desire to live again in this world, only that I might do more good than I have done. Instead of being immersed at nineteen, I would go into the church at fifteen, and instead of waiting until twenty-seven, I would enter the ministry at twenty, and I would preach, yes sir. If I were the son of a rich man, I would preach. If I were the son of a poor man, I would preach. If too poor to make a living, and the brethren did not support me, I would work on the bench, in the field, in the garden, in the schoolroom, and then preach as I had opportunity. I might keep some cows, and some chickens, but I would preach the gospel."

Before You Ever Get There

Johnny O. Trail

Over the years, I have done a significant amount of concrete work. I learned how to create forms, pour, and finish concrete from my father. He was a concrete mason at the Air Force Base in Tullahoma, Tennessee for several years before his job changed. Learning his profession taught me many lessons about preparation and planning.

Once you start pouring concrete into a form you cannot wait or delay in leveling or finishing the pour. For that reason, you need to have the forms secure and correct before the concrete truck ever arrives. All tools needed for pouring and finishing the concrete need to be available and ready. Preparation is everything for a successful job.

The real work begins in digging and making the forms. One must make sure that they adequately reflect what the desired outcome is as displayed in the blueprints or drawings. If the form "moves" or is not correct once the pour starts, it is too late to make corrections. In such settings one stands to lose time, labor, and a significant amount of money for poor workmanship in preparation.

The idea of preparation is a profound consideration in spiritual matters too. Many of the statements that precede changes in doctrine or moral stance always cause me to cringe. With little variation, I know that something bad is about to happen or be spoken by the one contemplating a change. Several examples immediately come to mind.

One must prepare and decide what he believes regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage before he or any of his loved ones get into that situation. The Bible offers teaching on this

matter that is not hard to understand. Matthew 19:9 says, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

I have heard some ridiculous defenses on one's decisions to divorce for reasons other than fornication and subsequently remarry. One person said to their mate, "Your father has been divorced and remarried five times, and they believe they are going to heaven." I suppose if the same man had murdered five people and determined that he was going to heaven without any repentance, it would be okay for any person to do likewise?!

Consequently, someone once said, "There are many people in the church who believe one can divorce and remarry for reasons other than fornication." I know this to be the case, but that does not make it right! We should never be willing to follow a multitude of people into destruction. Matthew 7:13-14 says, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." The real question is "What does the Bible teach about the matter?"

Along these same lines of reasoning, I have heard people say, "I do not believe what the church of Christ teaches on these matters." Well, I do not either. There is no such thing as "church of Christ doctrine." There is biblical or "sound" doctrine versus false doctrine. We are admonished to proclaim or teach sound doctrine by the Apostle Paul. 2 Timothy 1:13 says, "Hold fast the

pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." Still, this idea is used to justify a departure from sound doctrine regarding many issues.

Various congregations that re-examine doctrinal issues had better seriously consider the ramifications of their decisions. 2 Timothy 4:2-4 says, "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." I always cringe when a church says, "We have re-examined the issue and arrived at different conclusion." This conclusion is almost always against the clear teaching of God's word.

Progressive churches will proclaim, "We have reached a different conclusion regarding the use of instruments in worship" (Colossians 3:16-17). Certain false teachers will say, "We have reached a different conclusion regarding the role of

women in a mixed worship assembly" (cf. 1 Timothy 2:8-15). Sectarians will say, "There are Christians in all denominations" (cf. Ephesians 4:4). Heretics will say, "One does not really have to be baptized for the remission of sins" (cf. 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38) The truth has not changed (John 8:32). Their treatment of the truth did!

Christians, Elders, and members of the Lord's church had better determine the truth and resolved to stand for it before they face the issues that have been summarily addressed in this article. Act 20:27-31 says, "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

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The Importance of Bible Study

Mike Kiser

Introduction:

1. The sign in the front yard tells the passing people that we have Bible Study at 9:45.
2. We might have used different wording: Sunday School. We might go back to an old name used for a TV program, "Family Bible Time." Or a recent title used, "Sunshine for the Soul."
3. No matter what the sign says, it does not seem to be drawing folks our way who pass day-to-day.
4. It might be hard to convince some of our members that something worthwhile is going on. Why do we need to study the Bible? (Seven words stand out in our text **2 Timothy 3:14-17**.)

Discussion:

I. "Holy Scriptures."

- A. These are "sacred writings". Therefore, NOT common or profane.
- B. This should guard us from the misuse of the Bible that we see so often in people taking oaths, trying to prove anything by the Bible; paraphrases, translations, and foot notes annotations that teach men's ideas.
- C. This is a living message. The place we stand on is "holy ground." Hebrews 4:12.

II. "Inspiration."

- A. The meaning is "God breathed." He breathed out these words.
- B. This how we are able to know the mind of God. 1 Corinthians 2:9-16.
- C. The scriptures contain the thoughts of God. Isaiah 55:8, 9.
- D. We should beware of acting like Naaman, "Behold I thought." Or Saul of Tarsus when he said, "I verily thought within myself I ought to do many things..."

III. "Known."

- A. Many have the notion that we cannot know or understand the Bible. Timothy knew it from a child and learned it from his mother and grandmother. 1:5
- B. He was taught to remember. Ecclesiastes 12:1
- C. So many parents keep their children out of Sunday School and then bemoan the fact that they are out of the church. Romans 15:4
- D. We are never too old to learn. I pads, I phones, and recipes. We apply ourselves to priorities and things we like. Psalms 119:130, 104.

IV. "Christ Jesus."

- A. Christ is the main character in every book of the Bible. Luke 24:44-47. He is seen in type and prophecy.
- B. We are not saved by all this false fault finding and supposed contradictions with science and history. There are no contradictions in the Bible.
- C. The scriptures build faith in Christ as the only savior of man. Romans 10:17; John 14:6; Acts 4:12.

V. "Salvation."

- A. The scriptures show us the need to be saved. Romans 3:23.
- B. They awaken in us a desire to be saved. Acts 2:37.
- C. They surely point out to us what then to do to be saved. Acts 2:38.
- D. They teach us how to maintain that salvation. Phil. 2:12
- E. They also speak to us of the time we shall be delivered from sin. 1 Peter 1:5; Hebrews 9:28.

VI. "Profitable." (Four areas are stated:)

- A. Doctrine- which is teaching. Acts 2:42; Matthew 28:20
- B. Reproof- which embraces the idea to convict or rebuke. John 16:8
- C. Correction- to restore things to their proper use and place which will bring about an improvement in life and character.
- D. Instruction in Righteousness. The schooling of mankind in righteousness and true spiritual living. 2 Peter 3:18

VII. **"Perfect."**

- A. We start out as babes in Christ, and we are to grow. 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18.
- B. To be perfect does not mean to be "sinless". 1 John 1:8; but "mature".
- C. To be what we ought to be. This causes us to live a practical life, and results in receiving an inheritance. Acts 2:32.

Conclusion:

- I. How important are these seven words to you?
- II. How important should be your devotion to Bible study?



Thanks for Reading!