

The Bible: God's Only Book of . . .

David Halbrook

Experts say that we communicate more non-verbally than we do with words. But God communicates with man today only in the written words of the Bible---

God's only book of law Some people say the Bible is not a rulebook, law, or moral code, but this is false (Gal. 5:19-23; 6:2; Js. 1:25; 4:12). The Bible is the only book that teaches us what God expects us to believe and practice.

God's only book of promises (2 Pet. 1:3-4) Outside of the Bible, you cannot know of any promise God has made (to save, to punish, to end this earth). Study the Bible to learn to whom God has made promises, and what He promised them.

God's only book of prophecy The Bible is the only record of God's prophecies (2 Pet. 1:19). Reading of events God predicted (Micah 5:2; Psa. 22; Daniel 2:44) to have evidence for faith (not blind faith) and a shield when doubt creeps in.

God's only book of Himself Only in the Bible do we learn of God's mind, character, and deeds (Heb. 1:1-2; Ps. 18, 19). Without these, we will imitate the mind, character, and deeds of flawed people and be lost. [Contact us for a free CD on this or other Bible subjects.]

Editor's Note: In our present society, people believe that all spiritual books are equally useful or useless and have not learned what makes the Bible unique. If you see evidence of these false ideas in our society, your workplace, your neighborhood, or your family, find a way to make use of our *Arkansas Weekly* article this week.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Our fall gospel meeting is September 9-14 (Tuesday-Sunday) with Ron Halbrook.

Please check the lists of various assignments and work needing volunteers.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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“The Word Of The Truth Of The Gospel”

Connie Adams

From the place of his imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the church at Colosse, a place where he had not personally preached. These citizens of the Lycos Valley had become citizens of the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). Paul was thankful for their faith. He wrote *“Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love which ye have for all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth”* (Col. 1:4-6).

It is interesting that in this passage several divine principles are tied together. They had faith in Christ, love to all the saints, hope of heaven, and had come to know the grace of God. But notice that none of that could be enjoyed apart from *“the word of the truth of the gospel.”* Indeed, *“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). There is a *“hearing of faith”* (Gal. 3:2). Later in Colossians 1, Paul spoke again of *“the hope of glory”* but hastened to connect that hope with the message which he preached: *“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”* (Col. 1:27-28). You will observe also that *“the grace of God”* is something which they *“knew... in truth.”*

We are living in an age of subjectivism. Too many are looking within themselves for satisfying answers to the nagging questions of human existence. Forgotten is the precept stated long ago by Jeremiah *“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jer. 10:23). The humanist philosophy is that whatever we choose voluntarily from alternatives, having considered the consequences, is right for us and that we ought to prize that choice and

assert it to the point of making it a pattern of conduct. This is what is meant by “values clarification” in education today.

Denominationalism has, for many years, placed emphasis on religion that is “better felt than told.” Great store has been placed by being satisfied with religious faith and practice, assuming that whatever is sincerely done must be right. Many have relied upon subjective “feelings” as the evidence of salvation whether the word of God taught it or not.

Much is said about salvation by grace through faith. That is Bible doctrine and is certainly taught in Eph. 2:8-10. But God’s truth on any subject is the sum total of all he said on the matter. The passage from Colossians 1 shows that there is a “*word of truth*” by which things may be determined and that word of truth is in the gospel. So then, the final measure of truth in the spiritual realm is the gospel of Christ. Every doctrine and practice must be measured by that standard. The Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into “*all truth*” (Jn. 16:13). If the Lord did not teach it and the Holy Spirit did not move the apostles and prophets to preach it or write it, then it is not part of “*the word of the truth of the gospel.*” And since God proposes to save all men, Jew and Greek alike, by the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17), then if it is not in the gospel there is no salvation in it. If it is not a part of salvation then it becomes a source of damnation. That is why we must not go beyond “*what is written*” (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9-10).

We all need a warning here. It is not our right to offer pardon to an alien sinner on less terms than God has provided in “*the word of the truth of the gospel.*” Neither is it our right to offer pardon to an erring child of God on less terms than the word of God directs. In either case we have acted presumptuously and have not benefited our hearers in the least. All the fallen trees on the way to the baptistery and suddenly stepping in front of unexpected trucks, or praying soldiers in foxholes, or death bed stories, will not change what the God of all truth has said. I will leave the right of clemency in the hands of him who made us all, but I dare not offer it unless I can put my finger on it in “*the word of the truth of the gospel.*” Paul said the secrets of men will be judged “*according to my gospel*” (Rom. 2:16) and exactly there I propose to leave the matter. I can do no other without intruding into a realm which is not mine. I appeal for others to do likewise.

The Peril of Self-Pity

Mark Mayberry

Introduction: Anger is an appropriate emotion if properly expressed (Eccles. 7:9; Eph. 4:26-27), and pity is a marvelous quality if properly focused (Judges 2:18; Joel

2:18). Yet, anger often wells up in our hearts in response to perceived slights; pity is often focused, not upon the distress of others, but the desires of self. In such circumstances, both emotions are despoiled and degraded.

Examples: Cain was filled with self-pity because God accepted the offering of Abel, but did not regard his offering (Gen. 4:1-15). Jonah was filled with self-pity because of his hostility toward the inhabitants of Nineveh, and his distress at the loss of the shade which God had provided (Jonah 4). In the parable of the prodigal, the older brother was upset that his father celebrated the return of his wayward son (Luke 15:11-32).

Expressions: Cain's anger was improperly focused upon his brother because Abel's works were righteous (Gen. 4:4-5). After slaying Abel, Cain lashed out at God for asking, "Where is Abel your brother?" and then complained bitterly when his punishment was pronounced (Gen. 4:9-15). Jonah was angry at God for pardoning the Ninevites (Jonah 3:10-4:3), and at his subsequent physical discomfort, saying, "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life" (Jonah 4:5-8). Similarly, the older brother was angry at his father for a perceived lack of appreciation (Luke 15:25-30).

Encouragement: Speaking to Cain, God said, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen. 4:6-7). Although Cain was cursed to be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, God manifested undeserved mercy, appointing a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him (Gen. 4:13-15). God showed undeserved compassion to the hardhearted prophet, appointing a plant to provide shade; He also showed principled discipline to Jonah, appointing a worm to destroy the plant, revealing and rebuking Jonah's pettiness (Jonah 4:4, 9-11). The father showed undeserved sympathy to the older brother, passing over his self-righteous assertions, acknowledging his lifelong loyalty, affirming his position as heir, yet reminding him of the need for joyous celebration: "this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:31-32).

Conclusion: Avoiding the overwrought emotions engendered by self-pity, let us be slow to anger and patient in spirit (Prov. 14:29-30; Eccles. 7:8-14). When we are quick to judge our neighbor for some slight, perceived or real, may we recall that God often manifests mercy to those who are undeserving. May we respond properly to His compassionate spirit, and manifest the same spirit unto others (Rom. 2:4-11; 12:14-21).