



The Voice of Truth



January 31, 2010

Authority in Religion

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Jesus Christ has ALL AUTHORITY. Moses prophesied, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken," (**Deut. 18:15, 19**). Peter applied this Mosaic prophecy to Jesus in **Acts 3:19-26**. God said, "Hear him" (**Matt. 17:5**)! Jesus said, "All authority hath been given to me in heaven and on earth," (**Matt. 28:18**). This leaves no authority for me, John Calvin, Mary Baker Eddy, Martin Luther, Joseph Smith, John Wesley, a Pope, or anyone else. The question is, "What did Jesus do with his authority?"

Jesus placed His authority in His word, the word that He spoke. Christ said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day," (**Jno. 12:48**). If the word of Christ is that by which we are to be judged, then it behooves us to know what He said as compared to what others are saying. Also, if we are to be judged by His word, it makes no difference what WE SAY, what WE THINK, or how WE FEEL in religious matters. Christ's authority was not placed in Men, Councils, Assemblies, Ecumenical Groups, Catechisms, Disciplines, Creeds, Manuals, or Confessions of Faith. Christ's authority was placed only in His word.

Jesus' all-authoritative word was given from His mouth to His apostles. In His prayer, Jesus said, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me... I have given them thy word," (**Jno. 17:8, 14, 18, 20**). Christ promised the apostles help in remembering His word, saying, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and

bring to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you," (**Jno. 14:25-26**). Paul could not have declared "the whole counsel of God" unless he had received Christ's word (**Acts 20:27**). Peter could only have received "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" and his knowledge of Christ through that word (**2 Pet. 1:3**). But, what did the apostles do with that authoritative word?

Jesus commissioned His apostles to preach His word (**Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16**). Their obedience to His command is shown in THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. Paul declared the word had been "preached to every creature which is under heaven" in his lifetime (**Col. 1:23**). Besides preaching the all-authoritative word of Christ, the apostles wrote it. In **First Corinthians 15:1-4**, Paul said he was making known, in a letter, the things which he first received. The Thessalonians were urged to "stand fast" and "hold" that which they had been taught, whether by word of mouth or by his first epistle to them (**2 Thess. 2:15**). Paul emphatically declared, "The things that I WRITE unto you are the commandments of the Lord," (**1 Cor. 14:37**). Therefore, that which he wrote was the all-authoritative word he had received from Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The all-authoritative word of Christ was written for OUR benefit. Luke's purpose for writing was, "that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed," (**Lk. 1:1-4**). "...these things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life in his name," was the purpose for writing the Gospel of John (**Jno. 20:30-31**). Paul's purpose for writing was that, "when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ," (**Eph. 3:4**). Again, John wrote, "These things write

we unto you, that your joy may be full," and "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not," (1 Jno. 1:4; 2:1). Are the words written by the inspired writers sufficient to guide us in religion?

John 20:30-31 tells us that it was written so we could believe and thereby be saved. 1 John 2:1 tells us that it was written to keep us from sinning. It is through the written word of God that we have been "given all things that pertain unto life and godliness," (2 Pet. 1:3). Paul's statement, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," Second Timothy 3:16-17, should prove that the WORD of the inspired writers is the sufficient guide for us today. If the all-authoritative word furnishes us with ALL THINGS, do we need the catechisms, creeds, dogmas, or manuals written by uninspired, fallible men? Certainly NOT! •

"Some Things We Cannot Change" By Jarrod Jacobs

In the long ago, the wise man Solomon said, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered" (Ecc. 1:14-15). This is a hard truth for many people to grasp. Yet, this true statement is apparent to those who will open their eyes. Put simply, there are some things in life that we cannot change! Let us consider some of these together.

The Past

As much as we would like to go back and rewrite our personal history, it cannot be done! Our bad decisions, unkind words, and misdeeds are forever written in the past. (For those are the things we'd like to change, aren't they?) We cannot change those things. David felt the brunt of his past sins as he wrote: "Wash me thoroughly from

mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:2-3). The apostle Paul understood this as well. He wrote about his past, saying he was the "chief of sinners" for what he had done to Christ (1 Tim. 1:15).

What gives us hope is knowing that while we cannot change our past, we can receive forgiveness for our sins, and make a better future (Acts 2:38)! When we follow the Lord's plan of salvation, our past sins can be washed away (Acts 22:16). We can be made right in His sight!

People

In thinking about things we cannot change, let us not forget that we cannot change people to suit us! For example, a bride-to-be may look at her future husband as someone she can "change" to suit her ideals. After marriage, it will not take long for her to learn that her "changes" she had planned have failed. The reality of life sets in and her plans never materialize.

While we cannot change others, people can change their own ways when they are taught the truth! Is this not the very essence of Bible teaching (See: Jer. 7:3, 5, 26:13; Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 8:22, 17:30; etc.)? God's plan of salvation, and the intention of Christ coming into the world is based on the fact that people can change their own ways, and willingly turn from sin to follow the Lord! We could list numerous people who changed from unrighteous to righteous when they heard and obeyed the word of God. They did this, not because they were "forced" into it, but because they made a rational choice to do what is right when they were presented with the truth. It is evident that the only one I can control is myself. Thus, the Bible teaches us that people can change themselves, but we cannot change others to suit our whims!

The Consequences Of Sin

"The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). As much as people wish to "white-wash" sin,

and even deny the reality of it, the truth is that no one can change the consequences of sin! Sin's spiritual consequence is death. It has been this way since the beginning (**Gen. 2:16-17, 3:3**). Sadly, sin's effect is felt all over the globe: "*There is none righteous, no, not one... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (**Rom. 3:10, 23**). In fact, the unchangeable consequence of sin is so serious, that it required Christ to come and die as a sacrifice for our sin (**Matt. 18:11, 20:28; Jn. 1:29; Rom. 5:6-10**)! This was necessary, not because Christ's sacrifice ended sin's consequence, but so we might escape from sin's grasp!

Conclusion

How will we respond to things we cannot change? It is possible that your eternity will depend on your answer!

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

"Behold, I Thought..."

By J. Wiley Adams

2 Kings 5 is a classic account of man's wisdom versus the wisdom of God. In **Isaiah 55:8-9**, we learn that God's thoughts and ways are not man's thoughts and ways. His thoughts and ways are higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. What may seem right to man is not the criterion for pleasing God (**Prov. 14:12**).

In the earlier days of this century, gospel meeting sermons used to include such basic topics as why we sing but do not play, strange fire, the comparison of the Old and New Testaments, morality, and nearly every preacher had a sermon on Naaman, the leper. Under such preaching the stories of the Bible came alive. Brethren were well-taught. Even the children sat speechless at the Bible accounts of Noah and the ark, David and Goliath, as well as the wise man and the foolish man. It has changed but it needs to be revived.

Such a subject has been assigned to this writer for this special issue. It is about Naaman, the leper reported in **2 Kings 5**. No

one ever preached it better than the late Fred Dennis of the upper Ohio Valley. I can hear him now as he preached the plain and simple story of the need to let God have His way—the need to obey Him rather than man.

Naaman was the captain of the Syrian host. He was the Syrian king's chief-of-staff. He was a great, honorable and brave man. At times he fought against Israel and took captives from among them. One of these captives was a little maid who waited on Naaman's wife.

It was discovered that Naaman had the dreaded disease called leprosy. He was a leper. He sought desperately to find a cure. He was willing to try anything to get well. When the little maid from Israel knew that her master had leprosy, she told her mistress there was a prophet in Samaria (Elisha) who could heal him. The king of Syria heard of this possibility and told him to go with a letter from him to the king of Israel. He sent many gifts to get on the good side of him and he in effect demanded that he be healed. This nearly scared the king of Israel to death. He thought the king of Syria was trying to pick a fight with him. He tore his clothes in frustration. He said, "*Am I God to kill and make alive?*" No one had ever been healed of leprosy before (see **Luke 4:27**).

But when Elisha, the man of God, heard the king of Israel had torn his clothes in despair he said, "*Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.*"

So, this important man and all his company came to Elisha's door. Normal courtesy was not extended. After all, this man was an enemy of Israel. Instead of asking him into his house or going out to roll out the red carpet for him, the prophet sent a messenger with the simple message to dip seven times in the Jordan river and he would be healed of his leprosy. Sometimes we tell people we don't like to jump in the lake. It may have sounded like that to Naaman. He was outraged. He said in his wrath, "*Behold I thought, He will surely come out to me, and*

stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper."

What a simple thing the prophet had required of him to do. He took issue about the superiority of the rivers of Syria over the muddy Jordan. His pride was badly injured. He either had to get rid of his pride or his leprosy. In a rage he turned away. One of his servants was a wise man and appealed to him to try this simple procedure—wash and be clean. He decided to swallow his pride and obey the prophet of God. When he dipped seven times in the Jordan he was cleansed, *"and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."*

The lessons we learn from this Biblical account are several. First, we must go to the right source for help—the prophet and not the king. Second, one must then have faith enough to do what is required—not argue the point. Third, we must not challenge God's will at any point—we must yield. And fourth, we must obey God to obtain the desired end—salvation. Sin is worse than leprosy. Only the blood of Christ will take it away when we obey the gospel (**Rom. 1:16**).

As long as Naaman fought the will of God, he remained a leper. What a lesson for those of us who live on this side of the cross. God requires the hearing of his word to gain faith (**Rom. 10:17**), confessing the deity of Christ (**Rom. 10:10**), repenting of sins (**Acts 2:38**), and being baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**). This is plain and simple. Many like Naaman are outraged at its simplicity and turn away, but they are still in their sins. Those who submit and turn to God will go away with sins removed—saved.

Are you like Naaman? Many are. Why not be like the three thousand on Pentecost (**Acts 2**) or the Ethiopian eunuch (**Acts 8**)?

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Credit: Guardian of Truth, 2/4/93 •

I Am Your Bulletin

I am not just another piece of paper.
I am your weekly church information sheet.
I do not come to you easily, or without expense.
I cost money, time, thought, and energy.
I should not be taken for granted.
I can only be as useful and valuable as you allow me to be.
I am often abused and overlooked.
Sometimes all I get is a fleeting glance.
Sometimes all I get is a critical analysis.
I want so much for you to read me, study me, appreciate me,
and make me useful for your spiritual activity and development.
I want to serve you.

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com