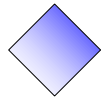


The Voice of Truth



February 10, 2013

THE WORD OF GOD

By Jimmy Pettigrew

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning” (James 1:17).

Men are surrounded by gifts of God. Jesus Christ is God's unspeakable gift (**2 Corinthians 9:15**); Eternal life (**Romans 6:23**); Salvation (**Ephesians 2:8**); Rain and sunshine (**Matthew 5:45**); Earth and fruitful seasons (**Acts 14:17**). Life is a gift from God (**Ecclesiastes 12:7**).

We want to look at the Bible as God's good gift to man. The Scriptures are inspired of God (God-breathed) (**2 Timothy 3:16**). The Bible is a gift from God to men. The Bible is complete revelation of God's truth to man. Mankind has failed to appreciate and respect the Bible as God's absolute and final will for man. *“The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?” (Jeremiah 8:9)*. Man in Jeremiah's day had failed to appreciate and respect God's Word. We live in that kind of society today! There is no respect for God and His Word. We humans do not generally regard rules and regulations as absolute occurrence. We usually perceive them as offenses upon our freedom; deliberate attempts to restrict our behavior. What about us in the Lord's church? We may have a tendency to display resentment and a rebellious spirit when faced with spiritual standards. We feel that God is prying and merely burdening our lives with offhand, senseless instructions.

God intends mankind to fashion his life, his thinking, his speech, his whole being according to that divine book. Man needs something to direct him in life (**Jeremiah 10:23**). God's Word is man's lamp and light (**Psalms 119:105**). God's Word is man's hope against sin (**Psalms 119:11**). God's Word is the truth whereby man may be freed from sin (**1 Timothy 2:4**). The truth of God's Word is the means whereby we obtain the purification of the soul (**1 Peter 1:22-23**). The Word of God gives all we need (**2**

Timothy 3:16-17). God's Word sanctifies (**John 17:17**); cleanses (**Ephesians 5:26**); it gives understanding (**Psalms 119:30**); it will judge us (**John 12:48**). God's Word has power to produce a new life (**James 1:18**). It is quick, living and powerful (**Hebrews 4:12; Romans 1:16**). It is able to build us up and give us an inheritance (**Acts 20:32**); set us free (**John 8:32**). It is able to make us wise unto salvation (**2 Timothy 3:15**). The Word of God provides us with righteousness (**Proverbs 14:34**). We become all God wants us to be through faithful obedience to His Word.

Now knowing all this concerning God's Word, His guidelines for humanity, His commands are not burdensome (**1 John 5:3**) nor too hard (**Deuteronomy 30:11**). The laws of God, His Word, for humanity are actually very desirable (**Psalms 19:10**) and tasteful (**Psalms 119:103**). As the Israelites were engaged in their final encampment on the plains of Moab prior to entrance into the Promise Land, Moses pronounce a most important principle: the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes . . . for good always (**Deuteronomy 6:24**).

You see, God is not asking us to do anything that will hurt us! God is not hampering us and exercising His authority in our lives in order to make us unhappy! Quite the opposite! Our obedience to His Word will make us happy! *“If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17)*. *“But he that looketh into the perfect law, the (law) of liberty, and (so) continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing” (James 1:25)*. Our faithfulness to His Word will make us righteous. *“(My) little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7)*. *“Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves (as) servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16)*. Our obedience will bring us true friendship! *“If ye love me, ye will keep my*

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commandments" (John 14:15). "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14). Our obedience will enable us to be saved (Hebrews 5:9). He offers salvation freely to all them that obeys Him. Though He has by the grace of God tasted death for every man and so made an atonement for all, he nevertheless bestows salvation only on those who obey Him. If we will do God's will, we will be wise (Matthew 24:45-46; 7:24). We become all

God wants us to be through faithful obedience to His word.

Friend, do not resist the commandments of God, no matter how difficult they may seem to be to you. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40). Read the Bible in order to be wise. Obey the Bible in order to be holy. Give me the Bible! For after all, it is given for our good! ♦

"Leaving Your First Love"

By Jarrod Jacobs

The adult class began this quarter studying the book of Revelation on Wednesday evening. I find the book of Revelation to be an amazing book that unfortunately is ignored all too often by brethren.

As is normal for me, after the class, I continue to think about the subject studied. Last week was no exception. As I thought about our study, and the various points made, it hit me that I had missed an application point in our study. This point, I believe, will tie together several key New Testament Scriptures; and I believe, help us to harmonize more of the Bible. Our study begins in Revelation 2:4-5, where Jesus said, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Some forty years after their beginning in Acts 19, the church at Ephesus was to be commended for many things. Yet, in spite of the many commendable qualities they possessed, Jesus said they had developed a very serious problem. They had "left (their) first love" (Rev. 2:4-5). What is their "first love"? Last Wednesday night, we spent time discussing this question, and some very well thought-out and appropriate responses were made. Yet, (as always happens with me) afterward, I thought of something else I believe would be appropriate and helpful to our study, and wanted to include it here.

First, when we think about "love" as was discussed in Revelation 2, we need to be reminded that God Himself is described as "love." John (the inspired writer of Revelation, 1:1, 11) wrote to the saints, telling them, "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). Through a word study, we find the original word translated "love" in English is the Greek word "agape." Therefore, in these verses, God is compared to love itself. (Like Jesus was once called the "door",

"shepherd", "lamb" and other things in Scripture.)

When I think about "love", my mind also goes to I Corinthians 13:1-8 where the apostle Paul admonishes the Corinthians to remember to love. To paraphrase, he says that without love as the motivator for the things he was doing, he is nothing and there is no spiritual profit for him if he acts without love. Does this sound familiar? Friends, the warning Paul gave the Corinthians was something the Ephesians LIVED in Revelation 2! The context of I Corinthians 12-14 discusses miraculous spiritual gifts. In I Corinthians 13, they are reminded of their need for love, and letting love be their motivation for everything, INCLUDING the exercise of these spiritual gifts, for they would soon end, (v. 8-10); but faith, hope, and love remains to this day (v. 13).

Seeing this is true, we return to our text of Revelation 2:1-8. Here, the Ephesians were condemned for willingly leaving their "first love". They were told to "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (v. 5). Understanding that John equates God with love (1 Jn. 4:8, 16); can we not then see that the Ephesians had in essence left God behind in their good actions (v. 2-3)? This they had done, and were condemned for it. They in a real sense had become like the Pharisees, who did good things at times (Christ never condemned their good, only their disobedience and hypocrisy), but were doing it for the wrong reason, or had the wrong motivation! For example, are fasting, prayers, and giving wrong? No! Yet, the Pharisees were condemned for their wrong motivation — to be seen of men (Matt. 6:1-18). In Revelation, instead of the Ephesians doing things because it was "of God" and allowing their love for God to motivate them, their good works became merely something that "they did".

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Another lesson for us is that what the apostle Paul warned of happening in **I Corinthians 13** was in fact something that had happened to the Ephesians! The warning that if things were done without love, it became vain, was something Christ said the Ephesians were living. They "*left (their) first love.*" This means the great and commendable things like their labor and patience, not enduring evil ones, testing the false teachers, and hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, etc., (**v. 2-3, 6**) became of no profit to them! (**I Cor. 13:1-3**) If this is not true, then why did Christ demand repentance of these people? It was not that they needed to repent of their good works. Rather, they need to repent and return to the correct motivation behind those good works! Their "first love," God (**I Jn. 4:8, 16**), needed to be their motivation, and at this point in time, He was not! Therefore, they were to suffer what the Corinthians were warned about (**I Cor. 13**) if they did not repent (**Rev. 2:5**)!

Conclusion

What can I learn from this? Let me learn that God is just as concerned about my motivation as He is my obedience to His commands! When it comes to my worship, my worship to God is to be done "*in spirit AND in truth*", not just one or the other (**Jn. 4:24**). In like manner, any aspect of my obedience and faithful living must be motivated by my true love toward God. This is made abundantly clear when Jesus said, "*If you love me, keep my commandments*" (**Jn. 14:15**). Parallel to this is another statement made by Christ: "*If a man love me, he will keep my words*" (**Jn. 14:23**). Again, we see love (God) as the moti-

vation behind our every action (**Col. 3:17**)! Ignoring the warning to the Corinthians (**13:1-3**) and doing things because "I" think they are righteous, instead of because of love or God motivating me, will result in my being in the same place spiritually as the Ephesians!

Friends, let us examine ourselves (**II Cor. 13:5**). What motivates us to be obedient? Is it worry over what others might think, or true love? Is our worship to God something we do from "habit" and "learned behavior" or something we are doing "*in spirit and in truth*"? Be honest!

Remember your "first love"! When we first obeyed the gospel (**Mk. 16:16**), we did it out of a love and admiration and appreciation to the God of Heaven who sent His Son to die as a sacrifice for mankind (**Rom. 5:8; Jn. 3:16; II Cor. 5:20**). We marveled at a salvation available to all (**Titus 2:11-12**), and were appreciative that we could share in it. Is our continued faithfulness (**Rev. 2:10b; I Cor. 15:58**) motivated by this same God, our "first love"? If so, remain faithful and steadfast and tell others of the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, and the joy of obedience when we are in a right relationship with God (**II Tim. 2:2; Mk. 16:15; Rom. 6:16-18; Acts 8:8**).

If this is not the case, and we have different motivations now than we did when we first became Christians, then repent today, as the Ephesians needed to do (**Rev. 2:5**). Our works will be as nothing and be of no profit if we are not motivated by the right One (**I Cor. 13:1-3**)!

Credit: The Old Paths - 11/7/10 ♦

THE ONE BODY

The church is the body of Christ, "And he is the head of the body, the church (**Col. 1:18**). There is only one body, one church. "*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (**Eph. 1:22-23**). The New Testament teaches that there is only one body; this one body is the church. We are "fellow heirs of the same body" (**Eph. 3:6**). We are "reconciled to God in one body" (**Eph. 2:16**). Christ is founder of only one church. "*Upon this rock I will build my church*" (**Matt. 16:18**). Jesus did not say that we would build a church, His church or one of His churches. He said, "I will build my church." The word "church" signifies singularity. Jesus did not build many different churches, but one! None should encourage any to seek the church of your choice, but the church of Christ's choice, that is, the one that is Christ-built, blood-bought (**Acts 20:28**), the one in which He is the Saviour of (**Eph. 5:23**).

Since there is one, and only one church and since Christ saves only those in that one church; thus, if one living today is not a member of that church (**Rom. 16:16**), then he is not saved. ♦

THINK! THINK! THINK!

What sort of church would the
Lord's church be if every member
were just like me? ♦

By What Authority? By Jonathan L. Perz

“By what authority are you doing these things?” While this question was originally asked of Jesus by the chief priests and scribes, the question, as well as the answer, has as much relevance today as it did then.

Whoever said you cannot answer a question with a question is sadly mistaken, for this is exactly what Jesus did. In reply to their question, Jesus asked the question, “*The baptism of John—was it from heaven or men?*” (Luke 20:1-8). By answering the Lord’s question, the chief priests and scribes would have the answer to their question. They were caught in their own snare.

They knew the correct answer to the Lord’s question, but their reasoning made them realize that if they answered accurately by saying “of God,” they would be exposing their error. If they answered “of men,” they would face the wrath of the people who were persuaded that John the Baptist was a prophet. Finding neither choice acceptable, they chose not to answer. Hence Jesus did not directly answer their question.

Did Jesus ever reject their question as an unimportant

one? It was indeed important and he answered it on several other occasions (John 7:17; John 12:49; John 14:10), even those among them knew the answer (John 3:1-2; John 9:33). Nevertheless, many today reject it as an unimportant question.

Take any “religious” practice today, whether engaged in by a church or an individual professing Christianity, and test it with the question, “By what authority?” You will have folks in the same dilemma in which Jesus put the chief priests and scribes. To answer accurately and truthfully, they may have to either openly expose their rejection of God’s teaching in light of their practice or they will have to incur the wrath of the people. Therefore, unless one has God’s authority for what he says and does (Colossians 3:17), it is easier for him not to answer or to belittle those who challenge his practices.

By what authority do you do what you do for Christ? If it is not authorized in God’s word, you are not acting by the faith that saves (Romans 10:17). Therefore, take care how you answer, for it will most definitely have eternal implications. *Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦*

Can You Imagine?




1. **Paul saying:** “You don’t have to obey the gospel to be saved?” Read **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.**
2. **Paul saying:** “We are sprinkled with him in baptism?” Read **Romans 6:4.**
3. **Jude saying:** “I don’t think it is right to argue the scriptures?” Read **Jude 3.** ♦

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3
- Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24
- Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30
- Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21
- Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27
- Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

Evangelist: Jimmy Pettigrew

| How to Contact Us | Our Address | Schedule of Assembly |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Telephone: (920)499-5677 E-mail: hillcrestcofc@live.com</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> | <p>1621 Hillcrest Drive Green Bay, WI 54313</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> | <p>Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*</p> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month</p> |