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The May–June issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* consists of articles primarily addressing the need for Christian service. As usual, we have articles from a few who write regularly for the paper and articles from first-time writers.

The *Gleaner* is intended to be a paper for the brotherhood. Any faithful preacher, teacher, and student of the scriptures is encouraged to consider writing for the *Gleaner*. We are laborers together with God (1 Cor. 3:9).

In this issue we have Lori Boyd writing. She is being published for the first time in the *Gleaner*. She is a studious and capable servant in the kingdom. We have David Hamrick writing for the first time in the *Gleaner*. David is the president of World Bible Institute. We also have an article from Emanuel Daugherty in this issue. To my knowledge, this is the first time he has been published in the paper. Brother Daugherty has labored for many years in the kingdom and in training preachers. Thank you for your contributions to the paper!

We pray this issue will help every reader grow in God's grace and knowledge. Let us strive to be the best servants we can be for the Lord, His word, and His church!

There Are No Minor Servants of the Lord

John T. Polk, II

After a victory over the Amalekites and upon his return, we find this event from the life of David:

“Then David took all the flocks and herds they had driven before those other livestock, and said, ‘This is David's spoil.’ Now David came to the two hundred men who had been so weary that they could not follow David, whom they also had made to stay at the Brook Besor. So they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near the people, he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless men of those who went with David answered and said, ‘Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except for every man's wife and children, that they may lead them away and depart.’ But David said, ‘My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us. For who will heed you in this matter? But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.’ So it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day” (1 Samuel 30:20-25).

The ones who had gone “down to the battle” were no more important than those who had stayed “by the

supplies.” The frontline soldiers put themselves in harm's way but might have had nothing to come home to if their “base” had not been protected! David's declaration was fair and equitable enough that “he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.” A military phrase for this is “I've got your 6,” meaning “I'll protect you from behind.” Pilots in combat called out positions of attacking aircraft in terms of a clockface. If “12” was attacking, then position “6” needed defending, so a buddy would call this out. Police also use the expression. Those who cover the “6” are just as necessary as those doing the fighting.

God has made this a part of His Plan:

“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:9-12).

It is easy for the devil to diminish one's obedience, disparage efforts, and

discourage Christians from completing their course. The devil's work stopped the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem in Ezra 4:1-5:2; the prophet Zechariah was sent to say: "For who has despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10). Every person who either was active in the rebuilding, providing meals, caring for their children, or in whatever way encouraged that effort was doing essential service for the Lord.

In heaven, in addition to the 144,000 from the tribes of the children of Israel, John pictured those surrounding the throne of God thusly:

"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Revelation 7:9-10).

AND they have work to do:

"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and

made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them'" (Revelation 7:13-15).

Where did they come from? "They" are "disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Ancient Egypt had a Book of the Dead, but the Living Lord has His Book of Life. "And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest

of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life" (Philippians 4:3). Some are named in scripture, but the vast majority are not.

While the apostles, prophets, preachers, elders, and deacons in the church of Christ may be known to us, the "great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" will stand "before the throne and before the Lamb." Everyone who serves the Christ will make up that "multitude."

No job, work, or effort any Christian may do is too small not to be noticed by God, and no one is more impressive than any other of us, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body,

*God remembers nameless
brethren unfailingly doing
unknown good things to
numberless saints.*

according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

It is as Peter said: “Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him’” (Acts 10:34-35). David may have been foreshadowing the church of Christ, for it is still God’s rule that “as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike” (1 Samuel 30:24).

As we conclude, consider the edifying words which are found in the New Testament.

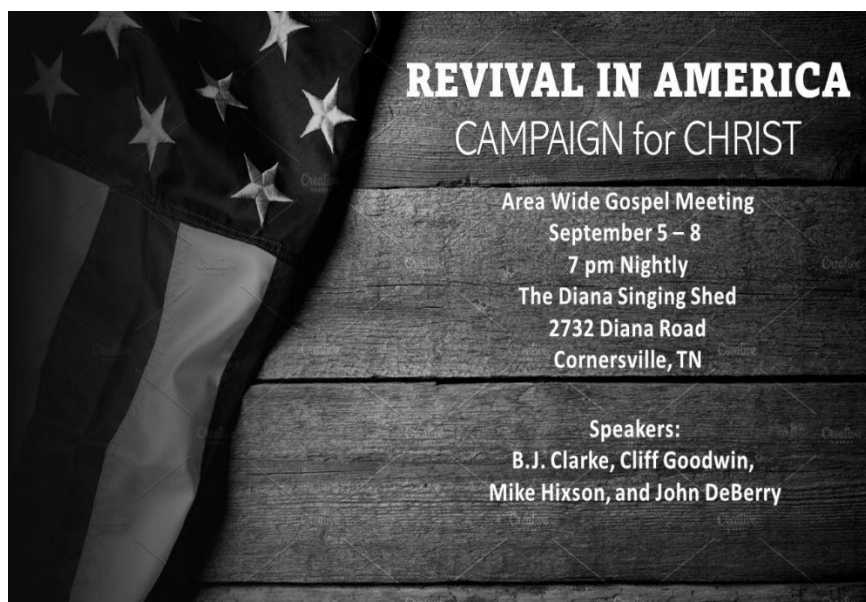
“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that

you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10-11).

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).

“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well” (3 John 5-6).

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9).

A poster for the 'Revival in America Campaign for Christ'. The background is a dark, textured surface with a large American flag on the left side. The text is white and centered on the right side. The title 'REVIVAL IN AMERICA' is in a large, bold, sans-serif font, followed by 'CAMPAIGN for CHRIST' in a slightly smaller font. Below this, the event details are listed: 'Area Wide Gospel Meeting', 'September 5 – 8', '7 pm Nightly', 'The Diana Singing Shed', '2732 Diana Road', and 'Cornersville, TN'. At the bottom, the speakers are listed: 'Speakers: B.J. Clarke, Cliff Goodwin, Mike Hixson, and John DeBerry'.

Elijah: God's Faithful Servant

Ivie Powell

When one studies God's faithful servant Elijah, a verse of scripture that quickly comes to mind is Proverbs 28:1b, "the righteous are bold as a lion." At the time of Elijah's appearance before Ahab, Israel had become steeped in idolatry. When Ahab the son of Omri became king, the legacy of wickedness was carried on. "And it came to pass, as it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him" (1 Kgs. 16:31).

During this time when God's people had departed from Him to worship and serve Baal, the Lord sent forth His servant Elijah to eradicate Baalism and to encourage Israel to return to Jehovah, the One, True, and Only God! Elijah's sudden appearance before Ahab is recorded in 1 Kgs. 17:1.

Pause and reflect upon the appearance of Elijah, "an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins" (2 Kgs. 1:8), and that of Ahab the king of Israel. Quite a contrast indeed! Elijah knew that king Ahab and his wife Jezebel were worshippers of Baal; without hesitation he boldly declared his belief in Almighty God. "As the God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain three years, but according to my word"

(1 Kgs. 17:1). Immediately following the divine prediction, upon God's command, Elijah fled and hid himself by the brook Cherith (1 Kgs. 17:1-2).

Some of the many events of Elijah's work for the Lord consisted of (1) prediction of the drought, (2) his flight to the brook Cherith, (3) Mt. Carmel contest, (4) flight to Horeb, (5) Naboth's vineyard, (6) Elijah's prophecy of Ahab and Jezebel's death, (7) the mantle being passed on to Elisha, and (8) Elijah being taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. Of all these events, probably the contest on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs. 18:19-40) stands out in most minds.

In the New Testament, several references concerning Elijah are given, four of which follow:

(1) The angel Gabriel announced to Zacharias the birth of John (Lk. 1:11-19) who "shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Lk. 1:17; Mal. 4:5-6). That "spirit and power" is vividly seen in Matt. 3:1-12, and especially in Matt. 14:1-12, when he boldly told Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." The Lord's estimation of John's work, "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11).

(2) At the transfiguration of Christ (Matt. 17:1-2), "there appeared unto

them Moses and Elijah talking with him (Matt. 17:3). It was then that Peter proposed to “make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses and one for Elijah. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). It is significant to note that after God spoke, Mark records, “And suddenly when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves” (Mk. 9:8). Luke also records, “And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone” (Lk. 9:36). It is Christ to whom God has given “All authority” (Mat. 28:18)!

(3) The apostle Paul references Elijah’s conversation with God thinking “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life” (1 Kgs. 19:14), and the Lord told Elijah, “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him” (1 Kgs. 19:18). As for the Lord’s church, God always has a remnant (Rom. 11:1-5)!

(4) James 5:16b states, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Elijah is cited as an example of “a man subject to like passion as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the

earth brought forth her fruit” (Jas. 5:17-18; 1 Kgs. 17:1).

Elijah was truly God’s faithful servant! A study of his life admonishes Christians to commit their lives to serving the Lord (Matt. 12:30; Lk. 11:23). The best “medicine” for discouragement, “be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

God always provides (Matt. 6:25-34) and rewards His faithful children (Rev. 2:10). Elijah is an example of a righteous man’s prayer. “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers” (1 Pet. 3:12).

When preachers preach as did Elijah, John the Baptist, and the apostles, persecution will come (2 Tim. 3:12). The Lord “hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5b-6).

Truly, Elijah was a faithful servant of God and was taken up into heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kgs. 2:1). May we so live that when we meet the Lord at judgment He will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”



Daniel's Service to God

Emanuel Daugherty

All students of the scriptures are familiar with the story of Daniel. We are not told his genealogy, and nothing is said about his parentage. He probably descended from royalty, nobility, or other prominent parents of Judah (Daniel 1:3). Surely, he is one of the captives prophesied by God's servant Isaiah nearly 100 years earlier (Isaiah 39:7). The time is 606 BC. With the defeat of the Assyrians and their capital city, Nineveh (612 BC), Babylon is now the super-power of the Middle East. God's people, Judah, will be in captivity for 70 long years according to Jeremiah (29:10). Daniel is one of them.

When taken from his home in Judea, Daniel is described as a youth, along with his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. (I have always imagined Daniel and friends as about 17-18 years old). These young men, along with captives from other nations conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar, were put in school for three years where they would be educated in the ways of Babylon and groomed to stand before the king as advisors and counselors. Their education was designed to 'Babylonianize' them: [1]The name changes praised the gods of Babylon, whereas their Hebrew names exalted the one, true God of heaven. [2]The food was dedicated to the gods and was contrary to the dietary laws of God. [3]Their

education would change their language from Hebrew to Aramaic, and over time they would perhaps forget their native tongue. [4]Even their new clothing would reflect the Babylonian design. All these changes would cause them to lose their Hebrew identity. These were trying times for these young men!

At the end of their schooling, Daniel and his friends were brought in before the king to be inspected and interviewed. Nebuchadnezzar found them to be better than the young men in school from the other nations. "None was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah...they were ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in his realm." Daniel is singled out as having "understanding in all visions and dreams...and they served before the king" (1:17-19).

In serving the king in an honest, truthful, godly way, they were serving the God of their fathers. Let us see the lesson here to use whatever tools God gives us – education, opportunities, and circumstances which may come our way, wherever God places us. Let us serve God and men faithfully! Daniel and his Hebrew friends are good examples! (Romans 14:4).

Interestingly, the book of Daniel was not recognized by the Jews of ancient times as a prophet but is listed among the books of the Hagiographa

(Holy Writings). Rather than this being a detriment and a put-down of his prophecies, as the liberal critics try to do, this rather helps us to see what Daniel's God-given mission was in the land of their captivity. Daniel was not a prophet in the truest sense, i.e., preaching and warning his contemporaries; he was a servant of God as counselor and advisor to monarchs and kings!

Little preaching as such is found in Daniel's book, but there is a lot of service, more than 70 years, to some of the greatest kings of the earth. Daniel wrote of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Darius the Median, and Cyrus of Persia; he prophesied the rise of Alexander the Great of Greece and the Roman Caesars! It was in this capacity that he served Jehovah, Sovereign and LORD of heaven and earth. "Daniel sat in the gate of the king" (2:49). "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (6:28).

It was God's will that His servant Daniel should announce some of the most precise and clear prophecies in the Bible of the coming King and His Kingdom. One has to have help, and lots of it, to mistake the message of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw and Daniel's explanation in chapter two (vv. 44-45)! Add to this the repeated descriptions of the four kingdoms in chapters 7-12!

When one examines these things in the clear light of the New Testament, how can one fail to see the fulfillment,

the church/kingdom of Christ? Liberals, premillennialists, denominationalists, and so-called scholars embarrass themselves and cloud God's scheme of redemption in a mist with their faulty interpretations and failures!

During the time Daniel was in captivity in Babylon, God had other servants among the prophets who were dealing directly with the people, preaching, comforting, consoling, and declaring the sins of Israel and Judah that brought on their 70-year captivity.

The bulk of Jeremiah's preaching was done in the years before and during the early years of the captivity before he was carried against his will to Egypt. Ezekiel was taken to Babylon nine years after Daniel (597 BC); he preached and prophesied to those of the captivity. Getting the feel of the situation of his fellow captives, he said, "I sat where they sat" (Ezekiel 3:15).

Ezekiel's book gives us no hint as to how long he served God in Babylon. I point these things out to assure all that God and His people were well represented and well served by His prophets. Each served God though they had differing ministries.

May all elders, preachers, deacons, Bible teachers, and servants of the Lord find our place of service in God's kingdom and serve to the best of our abilities! "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might: for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecclesiastes 9:12).

Paul: A Servant of the Most-High God

Andy Robison

Originally from Tarsus of Cilicia, Paul apparently came to Jerusalem at a young age to study at the feet of the greatly respected Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; cf. 5:34). Perhaps Paul was on course to be the next major rabbi in Israel. This young man sought desperately to please his God. As an Israelite, he was a top academic student and zealous defender of the Mosaic system (Phil. 3:4-6). Prior to conversion to Christ, he thought it a religious necessity to persecute Christians (Acts 26:9-11; 9:1ff.). In doing so, he acted in good conscience (Acts 23:1), trying to preserve the purity of the Mosaic system under which he was born.

Paul was of a unique generation—the only one that witnessed a transition from one God-authorized religion to another. Those born and raised under the Mosaic system were alive when the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ took place, nailing the old law to the cross (Col. 2:11-14; cf. Eph. 2:13-16). Some Hebrew Christians apparently had trouble sticking with the change (Heb. 2:1-4; 3:12-13; 10:26-31), but Paul did not.

As he would narrate before a king, while he was thus occupied hunting confessors of Christ, he saw a vision of the Lord (Acts 22:9-18). Although he was miraculously approached, he was saved by going into Damascus and obeying the teaching of the Lord

through a disciple, just as anyone else is saved (Acts 9:5-6; 22:16). He was obeying the risen Lord to become a Christian, but he was a special case. He was a “chosen vessel” of the Lord’s to “bear (His) name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15-16).

Once converted to Christ, He wasted no time. In Damascus, where he had hoped to drag Christians into custody, he instead began to preach Christ in the synagogues (Acts 9:20). The change was immediate and drastic, for this young man had a burning desire to serve his Lord, and now he knew the right way.

It is difficult to reconstruct exactly where he went and when he went. He spent time in Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18) and Tarsus (Acts 9:30). We reconstruct where he was when he wrote letters (cf. 1 Cor. 16:8; Acts 19). But we do not know the exact chronology of when all of the sufferings he experienced happened. He was three times beaten with rods (2 Cor. 11:25). These would have been Roman-initiated beatings, as the Jewish beatings were the ones limited to (preventively less than) forty stripes (2 Cor. 11:24).

It is simply impossible for us to know all the “weariness and toil...sleeplessness...hunger and thirst... fasting... cold and nakedness” that plagued this disciple (2 Cor.

11:27). But then, we do not need to know all the details. We just need to know that whatever it was, he was going to take it because he was the servant of the Lord (1 Cor. 4:1).

The young upstart of academic and societal promise became a bludgeoned old outcast for the sake of his Savior (2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-11). He counted everything as loss to know Christ and His resurrection, even if it meant sharing in sufferings (Phil. 3:7-11). That attitude carried him through many extremes.

Jews in Antioch in Pisidia ran him out of their town and chased him to the next ones, where they stirred people who had almost worshiped him to stone him and leave him for dead (Acts 13:13-14:20). He had to fight his own brethren for Gentile freedom in Christ (Acts 15). He had to endure a beating and a midnight prison and earthquake drama in Philippi (Acts 16:16-40). He dealt with Jews who dug in their heels to their old ways (Acts 17:1-9) and pagans who wanted to hear anything new (Acts 17:21).

He might have had to live with the knowledge that people he converted were mistreated because of their conversions (compare Sosthenes in Acts 18:17 and 1 Cor. 1:1). An economically motivated riot nearly turned into violence toward him because of his religion (Acts 19:21-41).

Sentimental Paul wept with elders from Ephesus (Acts 20:17-38) and desired only salvation for his Jewish tormentors (Rom. 9:1-2; 10:1-2). He spoke to a mob in Jerusalem and had to

be rescued from the Jews by the Gentile commander at least twice (Acts 21:26-22:30). Through it all, he did not lose heart, for he looked for the unseen, eternal home (2 Cor. 4:16-5:8).

Arrested, he worked his way through the Roman appellate court system, being comforted by the Lord along the way (Acts 23:11) and daring to speak of “righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come” to some of Rome’s most wicked politicians (Acts 24:25). He made his way to King Herod Agrippa (Acts 26), as had been predicted (Acts 9:15-16). The servant of the Lord would preach to the middle-class Jew, the poor and enslaved (cf. Acts 16:16-20), the high-browed philosophers, the governors and kings.

He cared not about class, money, or power. The only reason for his existence after his conversion was to serve Christ. Wherever that would take him, that would take him. Whatever that meant to his body, he was willing to take it (cf. Gal. 6:17). His only glory was in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14).

He sailed on three different ships (Acts 27:2, 6; 28:11) to make his way to Rome. Along the way—in one of his three shipwrecks (2 Cor. 11:25)—he suffered a fourteen-day fast at sea while the boat drifted mercilessly, sailors tried to escape, and soldiers tried to kill him with the rest of the prisoners (Acts 27:13-44). He finally arrived in Rome to meet with the ruler of the empire, to whom he had—as a right-bearing Roman—appealed (Acts 28:16;

25:11). There he met stubborn Jews whom he rebuked (Acts 28:25-28). There the inspired record leaves him under house arrest, preaching to visitors while awaiting audience with Nero (Acts 28:30-31).

History has it that he was released from that imprisonment, preached a lot more, and then was imprisoned again, which is when he wrote 2 Timothy, penning solemnly victorious words about the end of his journey and the beginning of his reward (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Most likely, his end came in around AD 67 or 68 when he was beheaded on the Ostian Way outside Rome. A cathedral now marks the supposed location (Jackson, 370).

What might it mean to be a servant of the Lord? See the paragraphs above. Paul, when met with a skeptical ear, boldly protested, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains" (Acts 26:29). He did not want people to suffer like he did, but he did want people to be saved. He

exemplified selfless service to Christ.

Had Paul remained religiously Jewish, he likely would have lived a luxurious life until about AD 70, when Jerusalem was massacred. As it was, he lived two years less but has been enjoying comforts in eternity (cf. Phil. 1:19-23) for the approximately 2,000 earth-years since.

Works Cited: Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles: from Jerusalem to Rome*. Christian Courier, 2005.



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Peter and a Servant's Heart

David Hamrick

Peter grew up on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee in a town called Bethsaida (John 1:44), which means “house of the fisherman.” He and his brother Andrew were partners with James and John in the fishing business (Luke 5:10). Peter and his wife were living in the nearby town of Capernaum when he first met Jesus. After a fruitless night of fishing, at the request of Jesus, Peter lowered his nets over the side of the boat. When Peter saw the miracle of his nets filled with more fish than they could hold, he fell down at Jesus’ feet and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). It was then that he, his brother Andrew and James and John were called to be apostles of the Christ.

Peter, it seems, quickly became a leader. No name other than that of our Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned more in the gospel accounts than Peter. The twelve apostles’ names are listed four times in scripture: Matthew 10, Mark 3, Luke 6, and Acts 1. In every case Peter’s name is listed first. We know more about Peter than any of the other apostles. He was clearly a leader of the group. Peter was the spokesperson and representative for the other apostles as indicated by his numerous responses to questions aimed at the group and the many questions he asked. It was Peter who Jesus chose to converse with relative to the paying of taxes (Matthew

17:25 ff.). It was Peter who essentially asked, “What is the reward for those who give up everything to follow you?” (Matthew 19:27) It was Peter who asked how often we should forgive a brother (Matthew 18:21). It was Peter who made the monumental declaration revealed to him by the heavenly Father that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16-17). It was Peter who asked to do the humanly impossible and walk on the water like Jesus while none of the others dared to leave the safety of the boat. It was Peter who jumped to Jesus’ defense and cut off the ear of an attacker.

Peter would often act or speak impulsively, and it often got him into trouble. He was frequently corrected and/or rebuked. No apostle was guilty of interfering, intruding, and even rebuking Jesus more than Peter. Matthew 16:22 records that Peter “rebuked” Jesus when He told them that He must go to Jerusalem to be killed and be raised the third day. Jesus responded with “Get behind me Satan!” Peter was saying essentially what Satan was suggesting in Matthew 4 – that is, consider the opportunity to have the crown without the cross.

It is true that no apostle was corrected or rebuked more often than Peter, but it is also true that none received more praise from our Lord. Jesus truly

loved Peter, not only as an apostle but as a friend (cf. John 15:14, 15). He taught Peter lessons on submission (Matthew 17), being a servant (Matthew 20:25-28), and restraint (John 18:11). He taught him humility as He washed Peter's feet (John 13); He taught him courage as he would die to the glory of God (John 21:18-19); He taught him forgiveness (Matthew 18:22), love (John 21:15 ff.), and faith (Matthew 14:29-31). Jesus was strengthening Peter for a life of service.

Remarkably, in his first letter, Peter wrote about submission, service, humility, courage, forgiveness, faith, and love. He clearly did not forget what Jesus taught him.

While Jesus had many followers, He had only 12 apostles. These were men He hand-picked Himself (John 15:16). However, among those 12, there were three to whom He was closest; Peter was one of the three. Those inner three (Peter, James, and John) were the select group who were given the privileged glimpse of glory as they witnessed the transfiguration of our Lord recorded in Matthew 17. That was a momentous event that strengthened Peter's faith and would stay with him the rest of his life. He even wrote about it in II Peter 1:16-18. Only those were asked by Jesus to join Him as He

prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37). However, it was Peter alone who was given the keys to the kingdom in Acts 2, and it was Peter who was chosen to use those keys to take the gospel to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert.

While Peter often expressed his loyalty and devotion to Jesus, even his apostleship could not insulate him from the fiery darts of Satan. His lowest point was a denial of his association with the Lord. Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times that night before the rooster crowed (Matthew 26:34).

Peter confidently responded, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." That night, after Jesus was arrested, all His disciples forsook Him

and fled. However, there was one who "followed Him at a distance"; it was Peter.

While in the high priest's courtyard, he was recognized by others. When accused of being associated with Jesus, he twice denied knowing Him. Then the third time he was accused, he vehemently exclaimed, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And through the crowd the Lord looked at

Peter had a servant's heart. Not only did he live the lessons he learned, but he also shared them with countless others.

Peter and he immediately remembered what Jesus had said.

We can only imagine the flood of insoluble emotion and immeasurable remorse that flowed through Peter at that very moment when their eyes met. The scripture simply says “he went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). As when he first met Jesus, once again he felt unworthy to be called a disciple of the One he once called Lord. Was he now useless as a servant for Jesus? Maybe in his own heart he was but not in the eyes of our Lord who still knew his heart and the potential he possessed.

After His death, the risen Jesus appeared to His disciples. He asked Peter three times, “Do you love Me?” Three times Peter responded positively. This was a turning point for Peter.

Throughout the book of Acts, we see Peter as a servant as never before. His love and devotion for the Lord motivated him to be bold, courageous, and determined to share the good news of Jesus. Nothing, not even threat of physical harm or imprisonment, could slow him down. He and the other apostles were given miraculous abilities through the coming of the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus (John 14:26; 16:13). Peter preached, healed the sick and even raised the dead.

He served the Lord with amazing confidence and apostolic authority. When Tabitha (translated Dorcas) died in Acts 9, the disciples called specifically for Peter to come. Peter prayed

over the dead body and said, “Tabitha, arise.” She immediately opened her eyes and saw Peter and sat up. Peter then presented her alive to the saints and widows. It became known throughout all Joppa and many believed on the Lord (Acts 9:38-42). Wow, this almost sounds like Jesus all over again, but it is Peter!

Peter described himself as a servant in 2 Peter 1:1. To him a servant was one who knew who was King. A servant is one who sets aside his personal rights in order to love, serve, and obey the will of God through Jesus Christ. Peter’s primary desire everyday as a servant was to honor and glorify the One who purchased his freedom from sin, seeking always to put His kingdom first. Peter successfully served the Lord for many years, leading multitudes to Christ, and later served as an elder in the church.

One of the greatest lessons we learn from studying the servant Peter is that God can use anyone to accomplish His will. Peter was a regular guy. He was a person with whom most everyone could relate. He showed great signs of strength as well as great weakness. He was not highly educated but was willing to learn. He oftentimes spoke and acted on impulse without thinking. Who isn’t guilty of that from time to time?

Peter is not the first unlikely candidate chosen for a major role in God’s plan. Moses was not an eloquent speaker, but God chose him to be His

spokesperson. David was not an experienced warrior and was but a youth. However, God chose him to defeat the Philistine's greatest warrior, the giant Goliath. While they both seem unlikely choices, God did great things through them. The same might be said of Peter.

I love this record of the apostle Peter because it gives me hope and confidence that the Lord can use me to accomplish great things as well. It

increases my faith in God to do a great work in me despite my short comings and faults. It appears that God prefers working with the "underdog." He chose a poor widow's meager contribution of two mites as the greatest example of giving and a little boy with a sack lunch to feed thousands. If God can do those things through Moses, David, Peter, the poor widow, and a little boy, then surely, He can use me as His servant

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Phoebe and a Servant's Legacy

Lori Boyd

How will I be remembered after I leave this earth? What will be my legacy? I know the Bible tells me that I have an appointment with death, so I think about those questions from time to time, not in a depressing way but in an inspirational one. It allows for a routine self-check as I look at my life, evaluate my priorities, and consider how I'm influencing and treating the people around me. It is motivation to refocus my purpose, recommit to my goal, and recharge my spirit!

I am thankful for the examples we have of men and women in the Bible whose lives have been memorialized in scripture and whose legacies continue to live on today. Some of those men and women we know well because we have been given long accounts of their lives, covering numerous chapters and even entire books. But sometimes we are only given a snapshot, maybe one or two verses, that provide us with just a glimpse into the heart of a godly hero or heroine. Enter Phoebe: only mentioned briefly in Paul's letter to the church in Rome (Rom. 16:1-2), but she is never to be forgotten because of the life she lived as a sister in Christ, a servant of the church, and a helper of many.

The first thing we read about Phoebe in Paul's letter is that he commended her to the Roman Christians as

both a sister and a servant. The word *commend* is translated from a Greek word that literally means "stand together" and in this context was used in the form of an introduction. Paul presented Phoebe to stand together as one with the Christians in Rome, and his expectation was for her to be welcomed among them. He referred to her as "our sister." As a sister, she shared a familial relationship with them through the body of Christ. Paul was making it clear to the recipients of his letter that this woman, Phoebe, was family. He went on to describe her as a "servant of the church in Cenchrea."

The fact that he referred to Phoebe as a servant paints a beautiful image of her character. A servant is one who attends to another, or performs specific duties for the benefit of someone else. The servant title given to Phoebe was also given to Jesus, who humbled Himself and came to this world in the form of a bondservant (Phil. 2:7-8). By His own words, Jesus told His disciples that He "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). Phoebe truly walked in the footsteps of her Lord as she lived a life in service to others.

Next, Paul encouraged the members of the church in Rome to assist Phoebe with whatever she might need because she had been a helper of many, himself

included. It is interesting to note that the King James Version translates the word *succourer* rather than *helper*. Succourer is not a word often used today and carries with it a slightly deeper meaning. A succourer is “someone who gives help in times of need or distress or difficulty.” Phoebe was a woman who had come to the aid of others when they needed it the most! What might this have looked like? We aren’t told specifically, but at a time when Christians were being persecuted, it makes me wonder if she opened her home to the homeless, washed the wounds of the beaten, fed the hungry,

visited the imprisoned, or dried the tears of the brokenhearted. In whatever way she might have done it, Phoebe provided help for those in distress, and for that she is eternally remembered.

In the brief look we are given at the life of Phoebe, we learn these timeless truths: the enduring bond of Christian family, the importance of being a servant of the church, and the good that comes from helping people in their times of greatest need. What a beautiful way to be remembered! Phoebe’s legacy should motivate all of us to re-focus, recommit, and recharge!



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Jesus Christ: The One Who Came to Serve

Mike Greene

Servant. Slave. Both are words that carry a lot of negative baggage today. In our society no one wants to be seen as a servant or a slave. To be so is to be seen as a second-class citizen. It is degrading, demeaning, humiliating, undignified, and a thing of which to be ashamed.

Yet Jesus is called both a slave and a servant. We prefer the labels Lord and Master to servant and slave. How can He be called both a slave and Master, a servant and Lord? In the richest prophesy about the coming Messiah, Isaiah called that coming Messiah a servant: “He shall see the labor of His soul and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11).

Jesus identified Himself as a Servant and slave: “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:26-28).

As Paul pondered the humility of the Christ, he acknowledged: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be

equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

Jesus being a bondservant, a slave, was not degrading, demeaning, humiliating, or undignified, but rather it was a precursor to His exaltation as the Christ, our Lord and Master: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11). Taking on the role and form of a humble servant or slave resulted in His glorification with His Father as He sits at God’s right hand in the heavens above (Matt. 25:31, Luke 24:25-27, John 17:1-5, 1 Pet. 1:17-21).

The terms *servant* and *slave* have skewed connotations by our own history and understanding. If one is placed in a subservient role by force and against his will based upon a supposition of inferiority, such a role could be seen as degrading, demeaning, humiliating, undignified, and a

thing of which to be ashamed. In the case of Christ and His disciples, it is the choice to become a servant or slave of another by free will that marks the distinction.

Christ was equal with God. He was/is deity. He did not see that as a thing to be grasped or held onto (ASV, ESV), rather He made Himself of no reputation, He emptied Himself (ASV) or made Himself nothing (ESV) and so humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the humiliating death of the cross, a thing which Paul called an offence (Rom. 5:15-20, Gal. 5:11, 1 Pet. 2:4-8). Jesus was not a captured slave or servant. He was not forced to a position of humble servitude. No, He took that role willingly.

Why? What would motivate the very Son of God, Himself deity, to put that aside, to empty Himself, to make Himself nothing and take on the likeness of man? And not just man, but to humble Himself and take the form of a

bondservant? One word captures that motivation...love. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). It was the love of God that motivated Jesus to come in the form of a humble servant and do for mankind what mankind could not do for itself. Such is not degrading, demeaning, humiliating, or undignified. It is love personified. It is love made real, made alive. It is love in all its power and dignity. It is the love that sends the very Son of God to wash the dirty feet of the disciples. It is the obedient love that brought Him to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Christ's example also lays before every Christian the challenge to accept the role of a humble servant. Herein is found true and real greatness, as well as the promise of exaltation with our Lord and Master before the throne of God.



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Moses My Servant Is Dead

Joshua 1:2

1. The Lord gave Moses the title “my servant.” Numbers 12:7 (30 times)
2. “His reverence for the Lord’s name was deep, his devotion to the Lord’s cause was complete, and his confidence in the Lord’s word was constant.”
3. Wm. Jennings Bryan: “Leader beyond comparison—lawgiver without a peer...Somewhere is the land of Moab, near Mount Nebo, he resigned his body to the dust from which it came and committed his soul to God.”
4. Let us study the words of Deuteronomy 34:5, 6.

I. Moses Died at The Command of God.

- A. Death is the common lot of all men. Job 14:14; Hebrews 9:27
- B. Death is in the world because of sin. (God is no respecter. Moses was not a sinless man!) Romans 5:12; Numbers 20:12; Hebrews 3:12
- C. The Christian can meet death with peace. Luke 2:29; Philippians 1:23; Acts 7:55, 56; Luke 16:22, 25

II. Moses Died Alone on A Mountain.

- A. On Mt. Pisgah, he could see the promised land. “The land of Moab”
- B. What memories passed through his mind? Hebrews 11:23-29
- C. Why did the Lord not fulfill Moses’ desire? Deuteronomy 3:23-28
 1. His work (leader, lawgiver, prophet) was finished.
 2. He spared him from the burdens of old age. Ecclesiastes 12:1-6
 3. He had something better for him. Hebrews 11:13,16

III. Moses Was Buried in An Unmarked Grave.

- A. No family nor friends attended his burial. No matter how many sit beside our death bed, there is only one that can go with us. Psalms 23:4
 - B. Moses’ grave is not unknown to the Lord. (No memorial, temple, grave marker, pilgrimages, relics, souvenirs, or tourist)
 - C. The people mourned his death for 30 days. He was a good shepherd. He could have replaced Abraham, but he offered himself for the sins of his people. (see Numbers 14:11-20; 32:31-32; 34:9)
1. He fought one last battle. Then was “gathered to his people.” Numbers 31:2
 2. He was present with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Matthew 17:3, 4
 3. He prophesied about Christ. Deuteronomy 18:18, 19; Acts 3:22, 23

- Mike Kiser

The Inspiration of the Bible (2)

The New Testament

Andy Erwin

After studying the Old Testament, one can sense that there more is to come. Malachi ends by looking forward to the forerunner of the Messiah to prepare His way. We are left anticipating the Christ, His kingdom, and His covenant. Clearly the story of redemption is not finished. Concerning the message of the Old Testament, Peter said, “Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days” (Acts 3:22-24). The New Testament serves the purpose of concluding, fulfilling, and legitimizing the Old Testament narrative.

The word “mystery” in the New Testament is significant in this regard. Think of the word “mystery” as being like a general’s battle plan which has been kept secret until the time for it to be implemented. Prior to such New Testament revelation, the meaning of the biblical subject was often “hidden” in this sense to the prophet and the hearer. It needed fulfillment before its meaning could be completely settled (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12). One example is the mystery of the Messiah, as it has been revealed in the New Testament (1

Tim. 3:16). So too has God’s eternal purpose for His kingdom (Eph. 3:9-12) been revealed. The Bible is incomplete without the New Testament. The Bible is incomplete without the Old Testament. One is required to understand the other.

Earmarks of Inspiration

The New Testament bears the same earmarks of inspiration as the Old Testament. J.W. McGarvey’s sermon on inspiration includes several of these earmarks.¹

Impartiality

No attempt is made to conceal the sins of the biblical heroes. We find no toning down and no apology for stating their transgressions. The sins of friend and foe alike are told in the fullest detail.

Consistent Emotions

The writers of the Bible remained just as calm when speaking of great miracles as when retelling normal daily activities. God’s judgments of reward and retribution are also told with the same demeanor. The martyrdom of close friends, and even the Savior Himself, is related to the reader with

¹ J.W. McGarvey, *McGarvey’s Sermons* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publications, 1975), 1–15.

the same emotion as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Such can only be accounted for by knowing these writers were restrained by the Spirit of God.

Brevity

How would uninspired human beings know what to write: what should be included and what should be omitted (see John 20:30-31 and 21:25)? Moreover, how could they do it over a period of 2,500 years? How could they do so within the confines of such small books? How could they treat such magnificent themes as the baptism of our Lord, His crucifixion, and His post-resurrection appearances with such brevity? Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke spoke of Lazarus. John does not write of Gethsemane. How could the antediluvian world only occupy six chapters in Genesis?

Infallibility

The biblical writers spoke on subjects that have baffled the greatest thinkers in human history – e.g., deity, angels, spirits, creation, existence, death, and eternity. Yet, on all subjects and on all occasions, they speak with a confidence which knows no hesitation and which admits no possibility of mistake.

The Power to Convict Men of Sin and Reform Lives

The power to change eternal destinies is not evident in any other book of the world. How can it be evident, therefore, in this Book if it too is merely just

another book given to us from the minds and will of men, however good they may be? Again, this phenomenon cannot be explained without accepting that the Spirit of God was at work to reveal the will of God to the creation of God.

God alone, who created the spirit that dwells in man, can communicate a message to us that will bring about this change (Heb. 4:12). God, who knows all things, designed a book that would speak to the spirit of man and sustain those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Internal Evidence

The internal evidence is seen in the writers who knew *they* were writing Scripture. The writers also knew *other* inspired men were writing Scripture. And the New Testament writers wanted the *readers* to know they were reading Scripture.

That Christians had a new law/rule cannot be denied (see Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16-17). Why would Paul write about an *Old* Testament if the *New* Testament books were not already developing? (2 Cor. 3:14) Why would he speak of the things being written “aforetime” (Rom. 15:4) if there was not something being written in the *meantime*?

The apostles knew they were delivering this rule through their writings (see 1 Cor. 14:37). Paul knew he was writing as it was revealed to him by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:9 ff.). He was declaring a “certified gospel” (Gal.

1:11-12). Other inspired men knew Paul was writing by the inspiration of God as well (see 2 Pet. 3:14-16).

External Evidence

The external and historical evidence for the inspiration of the New Testament should be considered as well. From the second and third centuries AD, we find allusions to various versions of the New Testament, quotes from these inspired writings, and even some lists that begin grouping the books which were believed to be inspired.² Below is a list of the historical evidence from the second and third centuries.³

- 1.) Clement of Rome (c. 30-100) knew at least Matthew, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, and possibly James, 1 Peter, 1 Timothy, and Titus.
- 2.) Ignatius of Antioch (c. 116) gave evidence of knowing the letters of Paul and especially the gospels of Matthew and John.
- 3.) Tatian (c. 120) was a disciple of Justin Martyr. He is said to have known and used nearly all of our New Testament books.
- 4.) The *Didache* (c. 120) cites most of our New Testament books.
- 5.) Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69-155) had at the least in his possession Matthew, probably the other three gospels, all of Paul's epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, and probably Acts also.
- 6.) Papias of Hierapolis (c. 80-155) was a student of Mark's gospel, as well as Matthew and John. He also quoted from 1 John and 1 Peter.
- 7.) Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) had access at least to all of the gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, and Revelation.
- 8.) Marcion of Pontus and Rome (c. 165) published a New Testament canon in 140. He was a Gnostic heretic who rejected Matthew, Mark, and John, as well as the Pastoral Epistles. He also "badly mutilated" the ten of Paul's epistles which he accepted.
- 9.) Melito of Sardis (c. second century) quoted from all of the New Testament books except James, Jude, 2 John, and 3 John.
- 10.) Hegesippus (c. 110-180) traveled extensively among the early congregations and "found everywhere the same doctrine."

² As far as the earliest Christian writings are concerned, an author may or may not have mentioned a NT book simply because of the subject matter he was addressing. In such cases, no argument can be successfully maintained for the exclusion of

certain NT books solely because a certain writer did not mention them.

³ Compiled chronologically from H.C. Thiessen's *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 6-27.

- 11.) Theophilus (c. 115-188) seemed to have had all (or at least a bulk) of the New Testament books and held them with equal reverence as the Old Testament books.
- 12.) The *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. 130) quotes from Matthew, while alluding to Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Ephesians.
- 13.) The Gnostic writers Basilides of Alexandria (c. 130) and Valentinus (c. 140) appear to have known and accepted in general the books of the New Testament.
- 14.) The Old Latin version (before 170) was in general use in Africa. It appears to have had all or most of the books of the New Testament. There is no evidence to support or reject the inclusion of James and 2 Peter in this version.
- 15.) Muratorian Fragment (c. 170) lists all but 1 and 2 Peter, James, and Hebrews.
- 16.) The Old Syriac version (c. 200) possibly began with only the gospels but grew to include all of the books except 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.
- 17.) Fragments of some Egyptian versions (as early as AD 200) contain practically the whole New Testament.
- 18.) Ireneaus of Asia Minor and Gaul (c. 140-203) used all four gospels, Acts, all of Paul's epistles except Philemon, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation. Again, his silence on these other books does not prove he was ignorant of them or that he rejected them.
- 19.) Clement of Alexandria (c. 155-215) accepted all of the books in the New Testament.
- 20.) Tertulian of Carthage (c. 150-222) believed Barnabas wrote Hebrews and therefore rejected it. Other than that, it appears that he accepted the rest of the New Testament.
- 21.) Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-253) wrote that the four gospels, Acts, thirteen epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation were universally accepted as Scripture, while Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James and Jude (among others) were doubted by some.
- 22.) Cyprian (c. 200-258) quoted from all but Philemon, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Hebrews. He may not have accepted these books, or he simply may not have had reason to quote from them.
- 23.) Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 200-265) used some of the "disputed books" such as 2 and 3 John as well as James.
- 24.) Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265-340) seems to have accepted all the books of the New Testament, although recognizing some were disputed.

25.) The Chester Beatty Papyri (c. third century or earlier) contain portions of three codices of the New Testament, which, when complete, include all the books in the New Testament.

From the evidence of the second and third centuries, there is no doubt about the early existence and circulation of these inspired documents. Even though some were not universally accepted, this proves little. An inspired book could also be rejected by someone today. The exception must not become the rule.

The Authority of the NT

When we speak of the *authority* of the Bible, we are speaking of the *governing, legislating, judging, and commanding power* of the Bible. The Bible has its authority because God has authority. To speak of the authority of the Bible is to speak of the authority of God. God has communicated His authority – His *power* in governing, legislating, judging, and commanding – in words which we can understand and know for certain.

Greg Allison observes, “For its first millennium and more, the church affirmed and practiced the supreme authority of Scripture. Even church tradition and its own authority played a ministerial role, being a servant to Scripture itself to weed out heresies

and to maintain the unity of the church.”⁴

Allison continues, “But a change took place in the latter part of the Middle Ages. As the Roman Catholic Church permitted other sources to lay claim to the title of authoritative truth, a multiple-source notion arose consisting of written Scripture, church tradition, and the teaching office of the church.”⁵ This change would lead to the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura* and the debate between Protestants and Catholics which continues today.

Moreover, “Although this division persists to today, a new attack against the very concept of biblical authority itself developed in the modern period. The idea of authority as an inherent property or attribute of Scripture itself was challenged, and in its place critics championed an instrumental or functional notion of authority: Scripture is authoritative because of the way it functions. Because the Word of God reveals God and His acts, because Scripture places demands on its readers, because the Bible bears witness to revelation and becomes the Word of God – for this reason it is authoritative.”⁶

As modern critics of the Bible attacked its inspiration and truthfulness, the demise of the doctrine of biblical authority was inevitable. Thus, “The

⁴ Greg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 79.

⁵ Allison, 79.

⁶ Allison, 79.

Bible as divinely authoritative became a principle target of attack in the modern world.”⁷ Conservative Christian scholars are therefore called today to defend the inspiration *and* authority of the Scriptures.

The All-Sufficiency of the NT

The Bible is not only all-authoritative; it is also all-sufficient. Through knowledge of the Son of God, we have “all things pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3-4). The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into “all truth” (John 16:13). “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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Within the Bible, a person can find the answers to the questions of what must I do to be saved and what must I do to remain saved? One can learn about the Lord’s church. One can learn about worshipping in spirit and truth. Truly, the man of God can be equipped for every good work.

The Trustworthiness of the NT

To speak of the trustworthiness of the Bible, is to speak of the trustworthiness of God. The Bible reveals that God is faithful and true, reliable and unchanging. If God is all these things (and He is), His word which bears witness of Him must also be faithful and

true, reliable and unchanging – in other words, *trustworthy*. If a person will not accept the Bible to be authoritative and trustworthy in *every* way, he cannot accept the Bible as being authoritative and trustworthy in *any* way.

If we believe God, we will believe His word. God has proven His reliability to man in both word and deed. He has kept His word and done exactly as He has said He would on every occasion. Examples of God’s prophecies and promises are found from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible is trustworthy because it has honored and continues to honor its purpose in every way (Isa. 55:10-11).

Conclusion

The Bible truly is unlike every other book known to man. The Bible is the only book that did not originate with man, but with God. It is the “Book Divine.” We love the Bible because we love God. We honor the Bible because we honor God. Let us obey the Bible because we desire to obey God. The world needs the gospel. May we desire His word more than our necessary food (Job 23:12). May we hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6).



⁷ Allison, 94.

Should We Apologize?

Tom McLemore

It has been suggested recently that members of the churches of Christ should *apologize* to members of denominations. We should apologize, it is alleged, for proclaiming that the churches of Christ are the one and only true church and for stating that denominations are not. What shall we say to this?

First and foremost, we may raise the question of *who the churches of Christ are*. According to the New Testament, the churches of Christ are composed of those individuals who have come to be *in Christ*. The New Testament teaches that those who are *in Christ* are also members of *His one body, the church* (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4; Colossians 1:18). His one body, the church, is *no denomination!*

Second, one may inquire as to *how one comes to be in Christ*. The teaching of the New Testament is that a penitent believer in Christ comes to be in Christ and thus to be in His one body, the church, by being *baptized into Him and into it* (Galatians 3:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Third, one may consider whether coming to be in Christ makes one a member of any denomination that exists today. There is not one shred of evidence anywhere in the New Testament that this is the case. For one thing, neither denominations in general, nor any of these denominations in

particular, receive any mention whatsoever in the New Testament. Let any member of any denomination consider the faith and practice of one's denomination and find such a church described in the New Testament. *It will never be found*. In fact, the very *idea* of denominationalism is foreign to the teaching of Scripture and flatly contradicts it (1 Corinthians 1:10). Coming to be in Christ does not make one a member of *any denomination whatsoever!*

Rather it seems to me that *denominations are the ones who should apologize*. Denominations should apologize to God for not rightly handling His sacred oracles. By emphasizing some passages of God's word and denying or ignoring others, they twist God's revelation (2 Peter 3:16) and make it void (Matthew 15:6). Apologies to God are also in order for honoring Him with their lips when their heart is far from Him. In vain do they worship Him, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men (Matthew 15:8, 9).

They should apologize to *Jesus Christ* for working to prevent His dying prayer that all who believe in Him should be one on the basis of the Spirit-taught, apostolic word (John 17:20, 21). Christ gave Himself up for His church (Ephesians 5:25), but He was not crucified for denominations.

An apology on the part of denominations should be forthcoming *to the*

Holy Spirit. He guided Christ's chosen emissaries *into all the truth* (John 16:13), but denominations, by adding to and taking from the divine revelation, have insinuated that the Spirit's impartation contained errors, came up short, and is in need of amendment.

The denominations owe *the apostles* an apology. The apostles were faithful to their Master by teaching disciples to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them. Yet denominations have persisted in refusing to devote themselves to the apostles' teaching and practice (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:42). Paul asked, "Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13), and his question expects a *negative* answer. Yet denominations are adamantly intent on giving it a *positive* answer before the world. Do they not owe *the apostle Paul* an apology?

It would be proper for denominations to apologize *to members of the churches of Christ* for denouncing, ridiculing, and opposing them when they simply have preached the whole counsel of God, upheld God's Holy Word as the sole authority for Christian faith and practice, and proclaimed exclusively the way of salvation that apostles announced in the name of Christ. Have churches of Christ then become the enemy of denominations *by telling them the truth* (Galatians 4:16)?

It may be granted that some members of the churches of Christ have manifested an unchristian attitude, have been self-righteous, and have been haughty and proud. Such

individuals do, in fact, owe an apology to any member of a denomination to whom they have exhibited these dishonorable dispositions. *But they do not need to apologize for the simple truth contained in the New Testament or for the pure gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16)!*

The suggestion that we should apologize is an example of the spirit of our age infecting the church. Many in our society are attempting to relativize everything, so that everyone may experience a positive attitude about themselves regardless of what they believe or do. In the final analysis, many will owe an apology to *the truth itself* because they have renounced, suppressed, and sold the truth and have exchanged it for a lie. "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things" (Romans 2:2).

Apologize for any mistakes, failures, inadequacies, and shortcomings *in being what the New Testament teaches the churches of Christ to be?* ALWAYS! Apologize for being *the church about which one reads in the New Testament?* NEVER! Let it rather be said of us, *without apology*, that we have "renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Becoming What We Worship

Johnny Trail

Paganism and idolatry were serious problems for the Israelites prior to the exile. The Old Testament prophets who communicated God's preexilic message continually warned about the path of destruction that God's chosen people were traveling. In their idolatry, they had reached a point where no prophetic message would change their minds. They were a people unable to respond to the words of God's messengers.

One might wonder why it became impossible for them to react in a positive manner toward God's prophetic message. The simple answer is they became what they were worshipping. That is, their adoration of idols turned them into a type of inanimate object that could not even hear God's plan for reconciling them to the God who was the source of their every deliverance.

This fact is described in Psalm 115:2-8. The Psalmist says, "Why should the Gentiles say, 'So where *is* their God?' But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols *are* silver and gold, The work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their

throat. *Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.*"

Furthermore, notice the description of the idols and the way that the Israelites are described by various prophets. Isaiah 6:10 reads, "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed."

Zechariah 7:11-13 echoes sentiments found throughout the Old Testament. "But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. Therefore it happened, *that* just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen, says the LORD of hosts." These descriptions are unmistakable—the were exactly like the dumb, mute, and heartless idols they were worshipping.

These Jews addressed by Isaiah and Zechariah were unable to hear, see, or respond in a meaningful way to God's warnings. In the same fashion, the idols worshipped by the people were unable to hear, see, or respond in any

sort of way to the supplications of their worshippers. Consequently, these Jews who were worshipping idols became what they worshipped. This is a powerful concept for Christians to consider.

Just as an idol made of stone has a “heart of stone,” the Israelites who were addressed in the prophetic language had stony hearts that needed to be replaced. Ezekiel 36:25-26 says, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” Their idolatry had hardened their hearts to the extent that they were past feeling and true repentance.

The weeping prophet Jeremiah makes this abundantly clear in Jeremiah 7:23-28. He says in part, “I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them*. Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. ‘Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you.’ So you shall say to them, ‘This *is* a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.’” Sadly their idolatry had turned them away from the one true God.

We should want to be like the One we worship. Scripture encourages Christians to be transformed into the image of Christ. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Hopefully, we are maturing in Christ and becoming more like Him from day to day.

Moreover, if we want to resemble the One we worship, we should be willing to suffer for our Christianity. Luke 9:23 says, “Then He (Jesus—JOT) said to *them* all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’” Paul understood the nature of suffering for the cross and even welcomed the privilege, so that Christ might be found living in him (Galatians 3:20).

Resembling the One we worship means serving others. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Service can include benevolent work, but it also should include personal evangelism (Matthew 28:19). Philippians 2:5-8 says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and

became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.”

Next, resembling the One we worship means being obedient to all the Father’s commands. One cannot claim discipleship and live a life of rebellion. Hebrews 5:8-9 reads, “Though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” Many in our time are like King Saul. They believe that partial obedience is complete obedience (1 Samuel 15:3 ff). This is a sad misconception of

what constitutes true devotion towards God (1 Samuel 15:22).

If we emulate Christ, we will also be like the Father in our behaviors and actions. John 14:6-7 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.’” Christians should seek to become what they worship so that others can see Christ (and thereby the Father) living in us.

WHERE IS THE VERSE?

Billy Lambert

I just heard a preacher say this on television, “If you want Jesus to come into your heart just pray this prayer!” He continued with the prayer that is supposed to put one into a saved relationship with Christ. Where is the biblical passage that teaches this doctrine? There must be one since this is so frequently repeated as the plan God has given man for salvation. Again, where is the verse?

It is alleged that one of the verses is Acts 2:21 where Luke, the writer of Acts, penned, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” I can almost hear some sideline spiritual cheerleader shouting, “Yes, that is it!” Question: Is that what Luke meant? Did he mean if you just call on God to save you that He will?

One of my vivid memories takes me back to a class I took under the late Dr. Rex Turner Sr. In one of his classes he remarked, “Things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other.”

You may need to let that soak in for a bit. I did the first time I heard it as a young preacher. My good, lifelong friend Luther Mixson told me that he used Dr. Turner’s statement in teaching geometry. He told me that it is the case in geometry that things that are equal to the same things are equal to each other. This is just simple mathematics. Two plus two equals four. Three plus one equals four. Hence, these two statements and their conclusions are equal to each other because they reach the same conclusion.

Now how does that compare with the so-called sinner's prayer? Note a comparison of three passages that contain the phrase "shall be saved." If one meets the conditions in these three passages, then one can enjoy the result, namely that you "shall be saved."

Passage one: Acts 2:21. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord SHALL BE SAVED."

Passage two: John 10:9. "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he SHALL BE SAVED."

Passage three: Mark 16:16. "He that believeth and is baptized SHALL BE SAVED."

All three verses contain the same phrase "shall be saved." Logically, to call upon the name of the Lord is equal to entering the door. To enter the door is equal to believing and being baptized. All three verses are equal to each other because they are equal in their result.

To call on the Lord's name is the same as entering the door and entering the door is the same as obeying the gospel as men and women did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47).

On the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, the apostle Peter preached the first gospel sermon under the great commission (Mark 16:15). After preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:22-24), the people asked, "What shall we do?" Some modern-day preachers would say, "Pray the sinner's prayer." The concept of a sinner's prayer is a recent phenomenon

not rooted in biblical truth. How did Peter respond to the question, "What shall we do?" In verse 38 he told them to "repent and be baptized ... for the remission of sins" (vs. 38). Put in the form of a mathematical equation, repentance plus baptism equals forgiveness of sin. In a book of sermons in my library is a sermon of a preacher who answered the people's question like this: "Repent and believe for the remission of sin."

The statement made in Acts 2:21 as to who SHALL BE SAVED is answered in verse 38. Those who believe on Christ, repent of their sins, and are baptized in the name of the Godhead for the remission of sin are those who are saved. Those on Pentecost were told to "call on the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21). They did so when, as penitent believers, they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38).

What happened to those who were saved? They were "added to the church" (Acts 2:47). To which church were they added? Since Jesus promised to build His church (Acts 2:47), it seems logical that they were added to Christ's church or the church of Christ. False doctrine versus the Bible is the choice we have. I don't know about you, but I don't want to gamble with my soul by believing some man-made teaching.

