

June 6, 2013

Dear Brethren and Friends,

What does the Bible mean to you?

Do you accept it as the very Word of God? Do you find in its pages the godly standards by which you seek to live your life? There are certainly other books claiming divine inspiration, and there are followers of the teaching of those volumes who zealously—even fanatically—dedicate themselves in unwavering obedience.

As Christians, we should have proven beyond all doubt that God has inspired, preserved and is continuing to utilize His written Word as a means of revealing Himself to us. The Bible testifies of itself:

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account” (Hebrews 4:12-13).

The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy regarding his ministerial responsibility, encouraged him to stay anchored to the Word of God:

“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 Timothy 3:14-17).

In the same letter, Paul stated, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Throughout the years, the ministry in the Church of God has challenged us to check out in our own Bibles whether what was being said matched up to the Word of God. This test has remained true from the start—consider what the Bereans did:

“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men” (Acts 17:10-12).

God even says to test Him by first obeying what He commands us to do. An example of this is in tithing:

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

This principle applies to all of God’s Word—we must first obey Him:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever” (Psalm 111:10).

Also:

“But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2).

Do we really and truly tremble at God’s Word? Are we afraid to wrongly apply Scripture—to suit our view, our own personal interpretation? Peter wrote of this wrong and deadly approach:

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace,

without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:14-18).

Consider the age in which we now live. If we are close to God and if we believe His written Word, then we also know that this is the time of the end—the closing generation foretold throughout biblical prophecy. A part of what we must guard against is found in Paul’s warning of what would be occurring, in which he said, “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).

This is most emphatically a fundamental reason for the carnage brought upon the Church of God in recent years! And as we have been warned, Satan’s attacks will continue—and people will still give into deception and fall away from the Truth of God, even up to the time of Christ’s return!

How then, in the face of overwhelming confusion, can we be certain of our own standing—our relationship with the Father, with Jesus Christ and with our being able to comprehend the Bible, truthfully?

In his recent sermon, titled, “Not Just For Women,” Mr. Norbert Link spoke of how we are to handle situations where compromise is threatened. He stated: “In a situation of conflict, we always have to follow God”; also, adding that we are to “never, ever follow anyone or anything which is contrary to God’s Will!”

Being able to accept this advice requires the kind of humility that comes through yielding to the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit. It takes having the mind of Christ, which means allowing Him to live within us—learning to think as He thinks, to react as He would and always being found imitating Him.

Jesus Christ told each of the seven Churches of God, identified in chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation, it would be to those who overcome that His promises would be given!

In another place, when speaking of the end of the age, Jesus warned His followers not to give up and turn away from God’s calling. He stated:

“But he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).

Many disciples were initially attracted to Jesus, but they didn’t stick it out. We have their record in John, chapter 6. Here is what Jesus said in answer:

“When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit [which] gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe” (John 6:61-64).

Peter was not one of those who didn’t believe; rather, carefully note how he answered Christ:

“But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:68-69).

Is that what all of the Words of God mean to us? Are they the key to eternal life for us?

Let us remember that just as we go to the Bible for proof of God’s Will, so is the Word of God the measure by which Christians are now being judged (compare 1 Peter 4:17-18). Jesus understood this reality, and when He was tempted by the devil to commit sin, His response was as ours should also always be:

“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”’” (Matthew 4:4).

In Christ’s Service,



Dave Harris