

A Light in the Valley

July 2015
Volume 1
Issue 1

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

One Message

by: John R. Gibson

Do you understand how amazing the Bible is? Do you appreciate what this book contains? In the production of this book the Lord God utilized about forty different authors living on three continents over a period of approximately 1,500 years. These men used three different languages to compose sixty-six books that have come to be bound into one volume and translated into the many languages spoken by modern man. These facts alone make it a noteworthy book and worthy of historical and literary study, but that which makes this book most remarkable is its one message.

Yes, despite being written by men of such varied backgrounds as shepherd, fisherman, tax collector, Jewish priest, military commander, physician, rabbi and tentmaker, it is a book with one underlying theme-God wants to save you from your sins.

In the books we know as the Old Testament there is a recurring theme that a Savior is coming, a Savior who will break the power of Satan, spring from the Jewish tribe of Judah, reign as King and Priest, suffer and rise again, bring forgiveness and blessings

to all nations, unite people of various ethnic groups, and do many other things for our benefit.

Then the New Testament opens with the announcement that the One who would “save His people from their sins” was to be born. The long-awaited Savior had come and for about thirty-three years he lived among men, teaching and healing, caring and correcting, but in the end He had to do that which had been predetermined before the foundation of the world: the glorious Savior, the Son of God, was put to death in a most brutal fashion on a Roman cross. But as the Bible tells the story of this gross miscarriage of justice it makes clear that it was far more than just another story of the legal system gone awry, for in His own words, He died willingly to give Himself as a ransom. The wages of sin had always been death and Jesus had died for all mankind.

While the crucifixion of the Christ is clearly the climax of God’s book, the New Testament does not end with the tragedy of the cross, but goes on to tell of the Savior conquering death by rising from the grave on the third day. Then forty days later He triumphantly ascended back to the Father

from whom He had come. From that point forward the New Testament becomes the story of how the work of the Savior can benefit each of us, for it is made clear that though He died for all, unless we respond to His gracious gift with true faith, obedient faith, we will not be benefited by that death.

Have you come to know this remarkable book and its one great message of salvation? We would like nothing more than to assist you in learning the great truths we have outlined in this article and how they can make all the difference in your life, both now and eternally. If you want to know more about the saving message of the Bible there are several options available to you. We would be delighted to have you visit one of our meetings where we have Bible studies each Sunday and Wednesday. You will also find that the sermons preached in those assemblies are based on the Bible and designed to help those present come to know God's will better. In addition, if you will contact us we will make arrangements for a personalized study of the Bible in your home, or another location if that is your preference. We also offer the option of a free Bible correspondence. Whichever your preference, please choose to know more about this volume with sixty-six books containing one great message - God's love and plans for you.

Continued from page 7

Additionally, we work so hard to keep people from feeling bad about the sin in their lives that we forget that they are supposed to feel sorry. Too many times, Christians seek to make a person feel good about where they are before they have the right to do so; in other words, we want to pass over godly sorrow and go right to the feeling we ought to get with salvation. Paul discusses this concept in 2 Corinthians 7 where he expresses that he is saddened that making the Corinthians sorrowful for their sin was necessary, but that it was in fact necessary. Individuals living in sin have to have godly sorrow, because godly sorrow leads to repentance...which leads to salvation! The purpose is not to create despair within a sinner where they are hopeless, but rather to create in them this godly sorrow and the realization that God can save them from this condition if they are obedient to Him.

Our conclusion concerning not only sin, but this life as well, should be the same as Solomon's and Paul's conclusion. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:13 that man should "Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all" and Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is the manner by which we should live and the attitude we should express to those around us.

Hating the Light

by: Kris Brewer

Recently, I have been reading from the gospel of John. One recurring principle throughout John's writing (in both his gospel and his epistles) is that of contrasting light and darkness. This theme is introduced in John chapter 1, where John declares that Jesus is the light of men (John 1:4). John records this information concerning Jesus as the light:

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1:4–5).

The word translated as *comprehend* by the New King James Version does not mean what we might think it means in our normal vernacular. The word, according to the Enhanced Strong's Lexicon means:

1 to lay hold of. 1A to lay hold of so as to make one's own, to obtain, attain to, to make one's own, to take into one's self, appropriate. 1B to seize upon, take possession of. 1B1 of evils overtaking one, of the last day overtaking the wicked with destruction, of a demon about to torment one. 1B2 in a good sense, of Christ by his holy power and influence laying hold of the human mind and will, in order to prompt and govern it.¹

The meaning of this verse is more clearly seen in the English Standard Version of the Bible:

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5).

The emphasis here is placed on the power of Jesus, who is the light that shines unto men. No matter how wicked the world was, or now is, the light that is Jesus is able to overcome the darkness!

Unfortunately, this light was not well received by the very people He came to rescue from the darkness. In fact, John tells us that Jesus was not even received by His own people, the people who had been given the prophecies of His coming from the beginning of their existence as a separated nation of people. He is the Creator, and came to His own creation to offer salvation, and was rejected by the majority. How could this possibly happen? How could mankind reject the greatest thing to ever be offered to them? How could the Jews, knowing that the Messiah would

¹ Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

come, reject Him upon His appearance? The sad answer is that they could do that in the first century for the very same reason that people can reject the Lord and His gospel today: they don't want to change their lives! They want to continue in their sinful ways and keep anyone (even God) from telling them how they should act!

John identified this as the problem just a little later in his gospel:

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:18–21).

Notice that John distinguished between the one “practicing evil” and the one who would “come to the light.” Those who want to continue in their evil deeds will never come to the light that is Jesus! He wants to continue in his sinful practices, and coming to the Lord would expose his wicked ways. The one continuing in sin hates the light that would expose his wicked ways.

The religious, and denominational world around us has made it easy to continue in sin without reproach. The doctrine taught among many religious bodies dismisses the need for any action on the part of one called a believer (a term that usually has a much lower standard than the biblical definition of that word) including repentance. A doctrine of God's grace is preached that allows for a continuation in sin, expecting God to accept and overlook such rebellious attitude. In the end, people are left to do whatever they would like to do, and are comforted by their watered down view of God's expectations for His people!

In reality, those who continue in this way are not coming to the Light at all! They are not heeding the instructions of Jesus, and that which He revealed through His inspired writers as required for obedience. Note, for example, a couple of pertinent passages:

Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of

this to all by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:29–31)

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. (Romans 2:4–11)

In this latter passage, the apostle Paul made it clear that God’s reward comes to those who are doing good--doing what He has commanded them to do. However, the opposite side is expressed as well. God’s wrath comes upon those who focus upon their own desires, and therefore continue in their own sinful lusts. Those who refuse to obey the truth, and continue in evil practices will suffer the wrathful judgment of God. These are the ones who, regardless of how often they attend some church, hate the light. They will choose a church that will allow them to continue in their desired practices, without any condemnation. In doing such, they can soothe their consciences, and continue in their sinful practices!

If we do not hate the light, then we will be diligent to learn the will of the Lord, and then put it into practice in our lives. This will put us in the group that Paul said will receive the reward of God. If we are seeking to do the will of the Lord in everything, then our own selfish desires will fall by the wayside. We will not allow them to keep us from the Light of the Lord. If we are pretending to do His will, but refuse to give up these selfish desires, then we are among those who “loved darkness rather than light.” This is shown by our actions: “...because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Let us be the kind of people that love the light!

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

Perceptions of Sin

by: Justin Brewer

Recently, one of the ladies where I was preaching stepped on my toes and made an excellent point concerning the existence of Satan. Essentially, she said that we (Christians) get so caught up in proving the existence and reality of both God and Heaven that we often forget to express the existence and reality of both Satan and Hell. For me, this point struck home because even though I often make references to Satan, it is typically just in passing. When was the last time you heard a sermon strictly on the existence of Satan and his active efforts to obtain your soul?

Are you scared of Satan?

In all honesty, we spend very little time examining how Satan is an active adversary and we more often than not treat him as though he were a fairy tale. Satan is thrilled that many Christians take this perspective of him! If we convince ourselves that he either doesn't exist or that he isn't powerful, then we will not view him as a viable threat. Wouldn't that make us easy targets?

Modern Christians get so caught up in the rhetoric of political correctness and misguided compassion that we forget how truly vile sin is to appear to us. While we are to be compassionate towards the person in sin, which is to be shown through our willingness to aid them in finding the truth, we are not to be compassionate towards the sin. Our society has led us

to believe that sin isn't really that bad or that it is a state of being rather than a choice. Sadly, many Christians have fallen for this rhetoric and so we believe that alcoholism is a disease and homosexuality is something some people are born into. In essence, we cannot differentiate between the sinner and the sin.

How did the inspired authors of the New Testament view sin? Peter, speaking of Christians who return to the world after having tasted salvation, does not paint a very pretty picture of sin. He does not paint sin as something an individual "sacrifices" in order to become a Christian, but rather as something disgusting and revolting. In fact, Peter likens a Christian returning to sin as a dog returning to eat its own vomit and a pig returning to wallow in its own excrement. Does that glorify sin? How often do we refer to sin in such a manner? Unfortunately, we rarely refer to sin in this disgusting manner; we water down how bad sin truly is in efforts of not offending the person caught up in it.

Consider also how Jude depicts sin: "And on some have compassion, making a distinction [from the false prophets]; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh" (Jude 1:22-23). Jude does an excellent job of differentiating between the sin and the sinner: "...pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment

defiled by the flesh.” The terminology in this passage is active, not passive; Jude does not merely suggest that we subtly recommend that individuals cease sinning, but rather he says that we are to pull them from the fire. If someone were literally on fire, would we subtly suggest that they need to be saved from it? Or would we pull them from it? If we are willing to pull someone physically from a fire without fear of being perceived as not being compassionate enough, then why are we not as willing to do so for their eternal soul?

From the inspired New Testament writers, we have learned that sin is vile and disgusting. We have also learned that sinners need to be actively pursued and pulled from the fire; sinners need salvation, not “understanding” concerning the sin in which they reside!

In addition to how we view sin, we need to carefully consider our perception of Satan. Is he passive or aggressive? Does he simply sit by and hope that we fall into sin, or does he seek us out? What do the Scriptures say on this issue?

In 1 Peter 5:8, we read that our “adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Peter does not seem to be under the misconception that Satan is passive, but rather aggressive to the extreme. Perhaps our perception of reality has been skewed by the many movies depicting lions as cute, cuddly creatures and we don’t fully understand what Peter is saying. Or do we simply overlook this danger? Was Satan passive in Genesis 3, or was he actively seeking to make mankind sin?

Are you scared of Satan?

We often depict how glorious Heaven will be for the saved (as we should), but do we depict Hell as the pit of despair that it truly is? Do we give people a reason to be frightened of Hell? God certainly provides us with enough evidence of not only the existence of Hell, but of why we do not want to end up there. Do we pass that evidence on?

In Mark 9, Jesus establishes the principle that we are to do whatever it takes to avoid sin in our lives because of the horrors of Hell, which is summed up numerous times in the chapter by the repetition of the phrase, “Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.” Consider also the depiction of Hades in Luke 16:19-31; the rich man was so tormented that he sought the relief of a single drop of water (16:24). Does this seem like a place that we should passively hope to avoid?

Unfortunately, many Christians today are under the misconception that sin actually holds worth or value and that giving it up is the same as giving up freedom. Does sin have value? Are we making a sacrifice to obtain salvation? In John 8:34, Jesus says that “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” Does this depict freedom that Satan wants us to believe it is? If we do away with sin, then we are no longer slaves of sin (Romans 6:5-7). We aren’t sacrificing sin, we are being freed from sin.

Continued on page 2

Daily Bible Reading

August 2015

August 3 Genesis 1–4
August 4 Genesis 5–9
August 5 Genesis 10–14
August 6 Genesis 15–19
August 7 Genesis 20–23
August 10 Genesis 24–26
August 11 Genesis 27:1–29:30
August 12 Genesis 29:31–32:32
August 13 Genesis 33–36
August 14 Genesis 37–40
August 17 Genesis 41–43

August 18 Genesis 44–47
August 19 Genesis 48–50
August 20 Exodus 1–7
August 21 Exodus 8–10
August 24 Exodus 11–14
August 25 Exodus 15–18
August 26 Exodus 19–22
August 27 Exodus 23–26
August 28 Exodus 27–29
August 31 Exodus 30–33

Gallatin Valley Church of Christ
C/O Kris Brewer
PO Box 11111
Bozeman, MT 59719

Mail To:

www.gallatinvalleycoc.com