

Gospel Truths



*"Love ... rejoices
in the truth" I
Corinthians 13:6*

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Editorial . . .

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The New Hermeneutics

HERMENEUTICS is the science of interpretation. The word is usually applied to the explanation of written documents, and may therefore be more specifically defined as the science of interpreting an author's language." (The word hermeneutics is of Greek origin from *ermeneuo*, to interpret, to explain; thence adjective *nermeneutike* (sc. *tekene*), that is, the hermeneutical art, and thence our word hermeneutics, the science or art of interpretation). (**Biblical Hermeneutics**, by Milton S. Terry, Page 17).

"Biblical or Sacred Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments" (Ibid, page 18).

In his book on **Exegitcal Analysis** Isaiah B. Grubbs said on page 1 under the heading Biblical Hermeneutics, "Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, and Exegesis is the practical application of the principles of this science in ascertaining or in setting forth the meaning of a passage or a statement. These principles are founded on the laws of thought as related to verbal usage and find their justification in the dictates of common sense."

The New Hermeneutics

As is usually the case, when some *new* doctrine comes along those who are instrumental in its inception are not in agreement as to just how it should operate. Thus it was said by one who is promoting the new hermeneutics that we cannot accept anything from Acts to Revelation as authoritative. His reason for such a statement was, since the "canon" was not completed until about 400 A. D. the Christians who lived before that point in time could not have used the things contained therein. I wonder how he would explain the following passages. "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10). Obviously it was possible for all to speak the same things without all of the letters to the churches being assembled into the "canon." In fact, Paul told one who was not an apostle, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou has attained" (I Timothy 4:6). Thus teachers other than the apostles were bringing to the remembrance of the people that which was taught by the apostles. The Word was in *the man* until The Book was completed.

In this same connection it was said by one who was vying for the new hermeneutics that we should just follow Jesus. That is our pattern. The pattern for the church is to simply follow Jesus and do good. However, according to the above argument since Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are all a part of the "canon" which was not completed until 400 A. D., if those who lived before that time could not follow what was written from

Acts to Revelation, how could they have followed what the gospel's taught about Jesus?

Let's just assume for a moment that the above position is true. (It is not, but for argument's sake, let's say it is). Just because those before 400 A. D. could not be guided by it, what does that have to do with us today? We have it, we **must** be guided by it. If the position were true regarding those before 400 A. D., then what happens to them is God's business. We do have the "canon."

Another point regarding the new hermeneutics is that of rejecting any distinction between the Christian and what he can do and the church and what it can do. Thus the social gospel concept. Since all forms of institutionalism and recreation are good works for the Christian, then they would also be good works for the church. In view of such division on hermeneutics, the following is inevitable.

God's Rules For Establishing Bible Authority

In order for all mankind to be able to agree on what the Bible teaches, there are some attitudes that one must possess. First of all we must all agree that the Bible contains *all truth*. We must also agree that this truth is *absolute*. Some say, "I believe the Bible is the truth, but I do not believe it contains all the truth in religion." But if we believe the Bible, we must believe it contains "...all things that pertain to life and godliness..." (II Peter 1:3). Also, Jesus told His apostles that the Holy Spirit would come and "...guide them into all truth..." (John 16:13). Now did Christ actually mean that they would receive *all truth*? That is what He said. If He did not mean what He said, what did He mean?

Also, in connection with this same point, the question arises "is

the truth found in the Bible absolute?" I know many who claim they believe that which is taught in the Bible is truth. However, they believe that all truth is *relative*. It may mean one thing to me and another to you. But again, that is not what the Bible says. "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10). If truth is relative, how could Paul's admonition be true? Two could never walk together if truth is not absolute, for they could never agree. Yet we know that Amos said, in order for two walk together they must agree (Amos 3:3). When one vehemently denies that the Truth of God's Word is absolute, I am always made to wonder if what the person is saying is the *absolute truth!*

Do We Recognize God's Word As Infallible?

Webster defines the word *infallible* as, "free from error: that cannot be mistaken." Unless we believe that God has given us a book free from error, we cannot accept the Bible as being our perfect guide. With an attitude of this kind, it is easy to see why some have changed God's ways so they are less objectionable to the world. But God said, "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). **Accept It As All-Sufficient**

No man or organization can be held responsible for doing God's bidding unless a sufficient guide or pattern has been given unto them. Paul said in II Timothy 3:16-17 that the Scriptures completely furnish us unto every good work. Now, did Paul tell the truth or not? I believe he told the truth. But if we do not

accept the Bible as all-sufficient, then who will provide us with sufficiency in religion? If it is sufficient, we must:

Be Determined To Be Guided By It

If we are not willing to be guided by the Bible, we have no place in the kingdom of God. We need to have the attitude of Samuel of old, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth." Christ said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." (I Peter 1:21). Christ is truth, His Word is truth, and through our obedience to truth we are made free from sin. To be united in truth, we must all be guided by His Word. Thus we must determine to honestly desire and work for peace and unity. All unity must be based upon truth, and the only truth we have in religious matters comes from the Word of God. Yes, division is condemned in the Word of God. There is one thing worse than division - *unity in error*.

What Part Of The Bible Is Applicable To Us Today?

In Genesis 12:3 God made a promise to Abraham that through his seed, all nations of the earth would be blessed. In Galatians 3:16, Paul tells us that the "seed" is Christ. This does not, however, obligate man today to obey the specific things Abraham was told to do to be saved.

After God spoke directly to the people in Abraham's time, Paul said the Law was added because of the transgressions *till* the seed (Christ) should come to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). The Law of Moses was not faultless (Hebrews 8:7), and thus Christ came to fulfill the Law and nail it to the cross (Colossians 2:14). "So," someone says, "you do not believe the Old Testament is worth anything today?"

Let's let the Bible answer that question. The Bible says, "Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Galatians 3:24-25).

The Old Testament, which included the Law of Moses, was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is *come*, we are no longer under the schoolmaster (Law of Moses). The Old Testament is not useless, however. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Now then, since we understand that in order to have unity in religion and in the church we must be guided by the New Testament today, were there any rules used by the Holy Spirit in establishing Bible authority?

How Is Bible Authority Established?

The Holy Spirit directed the apostles into all the truth (John 16:13). The apostle Paul, who was directed by The Spirit said in Philippians 4:9, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." Now in this passage, Paul says that those things which the Philippians had *learned, received and heard* (statements and commands) they were to do. Also he said the things that they *had seen* (examples) in him, they were to do. Thus in this passage, we learn that Bible authority may be established by statements, commands and approved apostolic examples.

Not only do we have these, but in Acts 15 the question of circumcision arose. Heated discussions (debates) arose over the matter (Acts 15:1-2). Must one be circumcised after the

manner of Moses in order to be saved? That was the question. How will the question be settled? In order to settle this question, the apostles and elders came together in Jerusalem. Remember now, these men were guided by the Holy Spirit. Whatever rules or methods were used in settling the question of circumcision in those days may also be used by us today. Following are the different ways the Holy Spirit directed the apostles to establish truth on circumcision.

How To Establish Bible Authority

**Acts 15 - Question - Circumcision 1.
Apostolic Example Acts 15:7-11 (Peter)**

**2. Necessary Implication
Acts 15:12 (Paul and Barnabas)**

**3. Statement (Command)
Acts 15:13-21 (James)**

In Acts 15, verses 7-11, Peter gave *an example* of how the Lord had sent him to the Gentiles, and while uncircumcised, God "put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (verse 9). Thus in order to prove that circumcision was unnecessary, the Holy Spirit used *an example*.

Next, Luke records only one statement (Acts 15:12) to sum up what Paul and Barnabas had to say on the subject. They "declared how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles." God *implies* by this that He approved the Gentiles (while uncircumcised) by granting to them miracles and wonders. Thus by *necessary implication* we infer that

the Gentiles were accepted by God without being circumcised.

Finally, in Acts 15:13-19, James cites a *statement* from the Old Testament where God, through Amos, tells of the acceptance of the Gentiles.

Now in order that we might know what God wants us to know and do in all matters religious, we must go to the New Testament and see what God's Will is on the subject. In fact, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in

heaven" (Matthew 7:21). So whether we are discussing what to do to become a Christian, the kind of organization God requires of His people, the kind of worship He desires, marriage, divorce and remarriage, etc., we must

consult the New Testament. Then according to that which we can establish either by statement (command), example or necessary implication (either one or all) we must do. But remember, we must take *all* God has said on every subject (God's pattern) realizing we cannot violate the "law of harmony," which simply means that truth does not contradict other truth. Thus if we put an interpretation on a passage that contradicts some other plain passage of Scripture, we have the wrong interpretation.

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