

# THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE



Our study is almost complete. To this point, our emphasis has been on the inspiration of the Bible, but the fact of inspiration underlies the authority of the Book. This final lesson, therefore, will stress that authority.

## “PREACH THE WORD”

No charge is more solemn than that delivered by Paul from death row in Rome’s Mamertine Prison. His charge was to Timothy, his beloved son in the gospel, stationed across the sea in Ephesus. The apostle was sixty-seven years old, five years beyond the time when he had described himself as “Paul, the aged” (Philemon 9). Branded on the old man’s body were the brand-marks of Jesus (Galatians 6:17). Those marks certainly included scars from the stoning he had endured in Timothy’s home town of Lystra, of which the young man was aware (Acts 14:19; 2 Timothy 3:11).

For more than one reason the apostle desired a visit from Timothy. No additional appeal from his death sentence was possible.<sup>1</sup> Execution was set for the spring, and Paul’s last winter, to be spent in a cold, damp cell, lay before him. Prisoners were dependent on help from friends (2 Timothy 1:16, 17), and Paul would need a hooded coat (Gk.: *phailones*) that he had left at Troas with Carpus (2 Timothy 4:13). Therefore he exhorted Timothy to “make every effort to come before winter” (2 Timothy 4:21).

However, the principal reason for his wanting Timothy to come was to place something more deeply in the young man’s heart. Since the apostle could not know for sure that he would

have a face-to-face meeting with his trusted protégé, he decided to put in a letter what he wanted to brand into the evangelist’s soul: *Preach the Word*.

For Paul simply to write “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2) would itself have been quite serious. Coming from a condemned prisoner deeply yearning for the salvation of souls, and being directed to a young minister on whom so much depended, the three words have added

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*“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2).*

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seriousness. Paul made the charge even more grave by telling Timothy it was being delivered “in the presence of God” (1 Timothy 6:13). Then he added that Christ in brightness (Gk.: *epiphaneia*) will perform the last royal duty of His kingdom in judging the living and the dead.

Certainly, Paul had said all that could be said to get the Ephesian preacher’s attention before he delivered the imperative to “preach the word.”

## THE MEANING OF “THE WORD”

When the charge (Gk.: *keruxon ton logon*, meaning “herald the information, proclaim the message, preach the word”) was delivered to Ephesus and read by Timothy, what idea came into his mind? What struck Timothy when he read the words *keruxon ton logon*? What was—and is—“the word” so urgently to be preached?

### The Word of Creation and Preservation?

Mighty was the word which brought the universe into existence: “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3). It was

the creative word of God that formed the earth out of water and created the heavens (2 Peter 3:5). "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. . . . He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:6–9).

The strength resident in God's utterance effecting the beginning of creation is still seen in His sustaining and upholding all things "by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3). "His word" (2 Peter 3:7) reserves the heavens and the earth for fire at Judgment Day. Although His word of creation and preservation is mighty, there is no indication that Paul's was discussing that aspect of God's word in his charge to Timothy.

### **The Word to the Patriarchs?**

God's word had come to Adam, to Cain, to Noah, to Abraham, and to many other patriarchs (Genesis 2:16; 4:12; 6:14; 12:1). Timothy was aware of this (2 Timothy 3:15), but there is no evidence that Paul had Old Testament utterances in view when he wrote to Timothy to preach the Word.

### **The Word to Israel?**

God's word thundered in a frightening way from the top of shaking Sinai to multitudes of Israelites in the valley below (Exodus 20:1–19). Later, God wrote with His finger on two pieces of rock what He had orally proclaimed (Exodus 31:18; 34:28, 29). In addition, He dictated a book of other laws to Moses (Exodus 24:4; Hebrews 9:19). Both the stones and the book contained the word of the Lord (Exodus 35:1). What Moses brought down from the mountain was to be the Hebrew standard of authority, dedicated by blood. It was neither to be added to nor diminished (Deuteronomy 4:2). He who despised Moses' law, the word of the Lord, would die (Hebrews 10:28). Anyone presuming to speak other than that which was written in the Law, God's word through Moses, was speaking without God's truth. However, as important as the word of the Lord in the Law was, there is no indication that Paul had it in mind in his charge to Timothy.

### **The Word as a Person?**

Likewise, Paul's charge does not appear to

have the specific meaning of the Word, the *Logos*, of John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word of John 1:1 was none other than Jesus Christ, who "became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). While it is true that Timothy was to preach Christ (see Acts 8:5), the "word" of 2 Timothy 4:2 appears to be the information or message about Christ which Timothy was to proclaim. He was to preach the word about "the Word," Jesus.

## **THE WORD ABOUT "THE WORD"**

### **The Word of the Kingdom**

As disciples of Christ, both Paul and Timothy would preach what Jesus preached. Mark 2:2 says that Jesus was speaking "the word." Jesus' message was "the word of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:19). Jesus was acquainted with Daniel's prediction that God would set up an indestructible kingdom (Daniel 2:44); He had left heaven to establish that kingdom. "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world" (John 18:37). "The time is fulfilled," He announced, "and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). Accordingly, He traveled through parts of Palestine for three years "teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23). So imminent was the kingdom in A.D. 29 that Jesus predicted, ". . . there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come" (Mark 9:1).

Indeed, in a preparatory sense, during the three years of Jesus' personal ministry (A.D. 27–30) those being immersed according to the teaching of Jesus and John (Matthew 3:1–6; John 4:1, 2) were entering the kingdom (see Luke 16:16). They were being born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:5), preparing for the Lord (Luke 1:17). In an actual sense, however, the kingdom was not actually set up until Jesus had received all authority in heaven and on earth, and had ascended to heaven to sit on the throne (Matthew 28:18; Acts 2:29, 30).

The kingdom preached by Jesus was unique. It was not to be of this world, but of heaven (John 18:36; Matthew 4:17): "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Its power was not in iron weapons but in the strength of love (Matthew

5:44). Its posture was not pride but lowliness (Matthew 5:5). Its thrust was not to get but to give (Matthew 10:8). It was not visible or tangible, but was to live in men's hearts (see Luke 17:21; John 18:36). Its principles were mercy, peace, and righteousness (Matthew 5:3–9). Truly, it was to be a foretaste of the heavenly kingdom after this life.

The first Day of Pentecost after Jesus' ascension is pinpointed as the actual time when the kingdom came into existence. On that day the newly crowned King, now in heaven, was anointed by His Father with "the oil of gladness" (Hebrews 1:9). After His coronation His first royal act was sending the Holy Spirit to clothe His ambassadors, His apostles, with the authority of the King (Acts 2:33; 2 Corinthians 5:20). Those ambassadors then proclaimed to the ends of the earth that, in addition to the earthly kings reigning in Rome, there was "another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:7). Wherever sinners gladly received the "word" (Acts 2:41) about the exalted Christ, they were immersed. Thousands, begotten by "the word" (James 1:18; see 1 Peter 1:23, 24), were led to pools of water to complete their being born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5).

Whenever "the word" was preached, it was Christ being preached (Acts 8:5), which was "the good news about the kingdom" (Acts 8:12). At the point of immersion, sinners were translated from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Colossians 1:13). Faithful service in the kingdom on earth would ensure its citizens that, after many tribulations, they would "enter the kingdom of God" in a better world (Acts 14:22). Thus it appears that the "word of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:19) as proclaimed by Jesus was "the word" in Paul's mind when he charged Timothy. Everything connected with that kingdom was to be included in Timothy's preaching.

### **The Books of the New Testament**

The King-sent Holy Spirit guided the apostles, such as Matthew, John, and Peter, into all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit also inspired the prophets, such as Mark, Luke, James, and Jude (Acts 13:1, 2), and guided Paul in the very words he spoke (1 Corinthians 2:13) and wrote (1 Corinthians 14:37) in at least twelve books. If all of this was accomplished (with the exception of

John's writings) by the time Timothy received his charge from Paul, then there was an abundance of information making up a written "word" from which the young man might preach. Practically speaking, since about A.D. 96, the "word" has been available in the form of the New Testament, from which ministers of the gospel can derive their preaching material.

The right attitude is seen in the man of God who is afraid to add to or to subtract from the Book of Revelation (Revelation 22:18, 19) or any of the rest of the twenty-seven books. He is determined not to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9–11). One who interprets "the doctrine of Christ" as meaning the teaching concerning the deity of Christ is still restricted to the teaching in those books. This is true because the deity of Christ included His authority (Matthew 28:18; 1 Peter 3:22), and He passed on His authority to bind and loose to His apostles (Matthew 16:19). The apostles either wrote or endorsed every book in the New Testament. Their binding and loosing authority is in each of them, and outside of them is no authority. To reject the doctrine of the apostles (Acts 2:42) is to reject Christ (Luke 10:16; see 1 John 4:6). Their word became Christ's word, and His word is the word of judgment (John 12:48).<sup>2</sup>

It follows that the books to be used in judging our souls on the Judgment Day are the books of the Bible (see Revelation 20:12). Out of them the dead will be judged according to their works. The heavens and the earth will pass away, but the books of the Bible are indestructible (Matthew 24:35). The "word of His grace" (Acts 20:32) today contains no less and no more than the twenty-seven documents divinely impregnated to make and edify citizens of the kingdom, and to give them an inheritance among those who are set apart (Acts 20:32).

## **SUBJECTS INCLUDED IN PREACHING THE WORD**

Since all of the twenty-seven books qualify as being "inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16), every subject discussed in them is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that God's man may be completely furnished for every good work. Happy is the preacher who, at the end of his ministry, can say with good conscience that he

has held back nothing that was profitable. The faithful preacher declares the whole of God's counsel, and so is free from the blood of all men (Acts 20:20–27).

### Inspiration of the Bible

As stressed throughout this study, one of the subjects included in the Bible and urgently needing emphasis today in the preaching of the Word is the divine inspiration of the Bible. If its inspiration is on no higher level than the plays of William Shakespeare or the prose of John Milton or the poetry of Alfred Tennyson, then the Bible is wholly a human book and cannot be preached as being authoritative. Since "a man's way is not in himself" (Jeremiah 10:23), a Bible from within man would leave mankind utterly helpless. The Bible is "a lamp to [one's] feet and a light to [his] path" (Psalm 119:105). If this were a completely human light, one would have to surrender confidence in the sixty-six books of the Old and the New Testaments as a trustworthy guide.

Though about forty human authors helped to bring the books into existence, the writers were supervised in their work, borne along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Some have erroneously interpreted the King James Version of 2 Peter 1:20 ("... no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation") to mean that one is not to express his own interpretation of a passage. When they teach this, they are doing the very thing they say should not be done. As a matter of fact, every teacher gives his own interpretation of whatever passage he is discussing—and he is supposed to do so.

Ezra and his co-teachers read the Bible to "men, women and all who could listen with understanding" (Nehemiah 8:2); "They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8). Teachers cannot avoid interpretation. Their concern must be that they give a correct interpretation, lest they twist the Scriptures "to their own"—and others'—destruction (2 Peter 3:16). Many are they who, for the cause of some faction, handle "the word of God deceitfully" (2 Corinthians 4:2). "We are not like many," said Paul, "peddling the word of God" (2 Corinthians 2:17). The Roman Catholics also misuse 2 Peter 1:20, saying this verse "shows plainly

that the scriptures are not to be expounded by any one's private judgment."<sup>3</sup> By their mandate, only the official interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church is allowed.

What was Peter actually saying? He was not talking about examining the meanings of passages of Scriptures, but how the Scriptures came to be. They did not originate in the writer's own thinking (his personal unloosing [Gk.: *epilusis*] of information). No Scripture at any time ever came into being out of a writer's own will; rather, men were guided by the Holy Spirit to do the writing. Peter's thought, therefore, was of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, as opposed to any human source. Peter put the Bible in a class by itself. It is not just a book; it is the Book of books. Only when the Bible is so understood can it have its rightful place and exert its force in men's hearts.

Another momentous passage is Paul's declaration that "every [single] writing" of the holy Scriptures is God-breathed (Gk.: *theopneustos*). Human writings are man-breathed (Gk.: *anthropneustos*). Actually, the translation that the Scriptures are "inspired" leaves something to be desired. The word "inspire" is from the Latin, meaning "breathe in." God did not breathe into a group of dead books, but the books came into being by God's breath: They are God-breathed. By way of contrast, a body of dead clay was breathed into by God, and Adam started to live; but the Bible did not come alive that way. There was no body of dead books into which God breathed, making them alive and powerful. Rather, God's breath, His Holy Spirit, brought the books into existence and made them alive and powerful when they were brought into being. To say, then, that the Bible is "inspired" is not a fully accurate translation of *theopneustos* in 2 Timothy 3:16.

On a high plane, biblical inspiration is (to use that inadequate word) God's breathing. Gospel preachers do their listeners a holy service by implanting the idea of a God-authored book in their hearts. "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me," said one Bible writer (2 Samuel 23:2), and "His word was on my tongue."

### A Personal God

Another of the great subjects every minister of the Word is privileged to discuss is the doc-

trine of a personal God. Not only is there a mighty creative force behind the universe, but that force resides in a Person. "He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?" (Psalm 94:9). He who created human personality can be no less than a divine person. He thinks (Isaiah 55:8); He knows (Exodus 3:7); He remembers (Exodus 6:5); He loves (John 3:16); He can be angry (Psalm 103:8). Although He possesses these human characteristics, He is not flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). He is spirit (John 4:24) and is not subject to death (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16). The one who loves life and does not want to become extinct in a cemetery rejoices that his Creator (Ecclesiastes 12:1) is able to be his eternal Savior (1 Timothy 1:1). The appreciative mortal should sing from the depths of his soul: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (Revelation 4:8). One who preaches the Word has much material to bring listeners into an acquaintance with their heavenly Father, and to make them want to live with Him forever.

### **The Son of God**

One of the principal subjects developed by those executing Paul's command to Timothy is to allow men to see the One who is fairer than the sons of men, the One into whose lips grace was poured (Psalm 45:2). This is the person with whom the Father is well pleased and whom He loves (Matthew 3:17). Evidence of Jesus' deity comes first from His fulfillment of Old Testament predictions (Acts 17:2, 3), written hundreds of years preceding His birth.<sup>4</sup> His matchless sermons stunned listeners two thousand years ago (Matthew 13:54), and their equal has not appeared. His unselfishness; His self-renouncement; His kindly heart; His consideration for women, for children, for sinners, for outcasts—all these qualities and more should cause one to recognize Jesus' "precious value" (1 Peter 2:6, 7). The more the lowly Nazarene is preached, the more people say, "What a Friend we have in Jesus!"

### **The Plan of Salvation**

No matter how firmly the foundation stones of biblical inspiration, theism, and Jesus' deity have been laid, a preacher is wasting his time

unless he also sets forth the gospel plan of salvation. It will not help for one to know of a Spirit-breathed Bible, of a personal God, and of the God-man Jesus unless he knows what to do to attain salvation from his sins. Jesus came into the world to save (Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15), but He will not save unconditionally (Luke 6:46). Since most people will be lost (Matthew 7:13, 14), a preacher who loves souls will ever be alert to show sinners what to do to be saved.

Some condemn outlining a five-step plan of salvation as legalism, but they are not helping to save souls. It is true that some people make the confession with their lips only, and some are immersed and only get wet. The fact remains, however, that God requires five human steps of obedience to attain His acceptance. While some say that Jesus is the only plan of salvation, they are misusing the phrase. Jesus is the way, and thus was the principal actor in God's plan (John 14:6); but Jesus alone will save no one. The plan specifies that life is with those believing and wrath with the disobedient (John 3:36). He will save only those who obey (Hebrews 5:9), and obedience is a step-by-step process.

The first step is a willingness to hear the Word preached, for some people have ears dull of hearing (Matthew 13:15) and will never be saved. "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9). Even the power of Jesus will not save those who close their ears (Acts 7:57).

The second step is a heart-confidence in the message about Jesus, a sincere belief that He is "God with us," Immanuel, a Friend who will stick closer than a brother (Acts 16:31; John 20:30, 31). "Faith only" has never saved anyone, either a Christian (James 2:24) or a non-Christian (John 12:42). Step number two is essential (John 8:24), but alone it is worse than unbelief.

The third step is a lip acknowledgment of what is in the heart: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37; see 1 John 4:15; Matthew 16:16). Jesus has promised that, when a sinner makes the "good confession" (1 Timothy 6:13), He will confess the sinner's name to the Father (Matthew 10:32). True believers are neither ashamed (Mark 8:38) nor afraid (John 12:42) to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus (Romans 10:9, 10).

The fourth step is a change in one's mind, an action usually called repentance. It is a reversal

in one's thinking, effected by his new faith in Jesus. He renounces previous loyalties (whether to money, idols, or Mohammed) and determines to make Jesus the Lord of his life. Repentance is preceded by godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10); it is a mind-change (Gk.: *metanoia*), followed by restitution (Matthew 3:8). It is the most difficult command in the Bible.<sup>5</sup> That it is a separate step in the plan of salvation is evident by the fact that one may have faith without any penitence (James 2:18–20). The devils believe, but they do not change their minds or their conduct: They do not repent. The English word "repent" (coming from the Latin *repenitere*, "to be sorrowful") is not a good translation of the word used by the Holy Spirit (Gk.: *metanoeson*, "change the mind, reverse mental directions"). It takes more than sorrow to carry out a *metanoia*, true repentance.

The fifth step is an immersion in water (Acts 10:47, 48). In itself, baptism is of no value, not even taking dirt from the body (1 Peter 3:21). In God's plan, however, it is exceedingly important. It is the difference between being in or out of Christ (Galatians 3:27), being in the body or out of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Without baptism there is no remission of sins (Acts 2:38), but through obedience to this command a soul is purified (1 Peter 1:22). Without immersion, one has not completed the new birth (John 3:5). This washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5) must spring from the heart (Romans 6:17); otherwise it is hypocritical legalism and merely a dunking. It is the dividing line between the world and the church. It is the transition from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Colossians 1:13). Baptism is so important that no example in Acts shows anyone who, having come to faith in Christ, took time to eat or drink until he had been immersed. Baptism was performed the same hour that one became a believer, even at midnight (Acts 16:33). It was not Christians who were baptized, but sinners. Baptism was what made people Christians.

The five steps for sinners in the plan of salvation are not works of merit. They do not earn one's salvation. Only the blood of the Lord can wash sins away (Revelation 1:5; 5:9, 10), but that blood does not wash away sins until a sinner complies with all five steps of obedience (see Acts 22:16). Preachers disparaging the step-by-

step plan or omitting any of the five steps are not declaring the whole counsel of God, but are leading people astray.

### The Church

In about A.D. 62 Paul wrote a letter to the church at Ephesus. That epistle must have been highly esteemed and deeply treasured. It was surely kept in some kind of church library and was there for Timothy to study when he arrived in about A.D. 63 to become a local preacher. Anyone reading that letter would conclude that, in God's estimation, the church is important. Paul's words portray the church as an institution which was planned from eternity (Ephesians 3:11) to be the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25, 26). After studying the letter and being exhorted to preach the Word, a preacher like Timothy would overflow with thoughts magnifying Christ's church. No one who preaches the Word can minimize the church.

Since Christ is coming back to save His church (Ephesians 5:23), a preacher who loves people will do everything within his power to motivate others to live and die in the church. True, the church itself cannot save. Jesus is the Savior, and the church is made up of the saved. Day by day, each sinner who obeys the five steps in the plan of salvation becomes a saved person, and the Lord adds him to that group of people who have done the same things (Acts 2:47). Those who continue in the faith grounded and settled, unmoved from the hope of the gospel, will be taken to heaven when the Lord returns someday (Colossians 1:23).

In the New Testament, the group of saved people is likened to the fold of Christ (John 10:16), to the body of Christ (Colossians 1:13), to the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13), and to the family of God (Galatians 3:26; Romans 8:29). Biblically speaking, the number of actual churches (not individual congregations) in existence is the number of "folds of Christ" and "bodies of Christ" and "kingdoms of Christ" and "families of God" located around the world. Many members of the Lord's church are scattered throughout the nations, but there is only *one* body. (See 1 Corinthians 12:20.)

The New Testament church is a nameless institution. Of the 112 occurrences of the word "church" or "churches" in the English Bible, it is

simply called “the church” or “churches” ninety-five times. Twelve times it is called “the church of God,” a phrase depicting ownership. A similar phrase, “Christ’s churches,” appears one time (Romans 16:16). Once Jesus called it “My church” (Matthew 16:18). Descriptions of the kinds of people making up its membership (Gentiles, saints, firstborn ones) account for the other three occurrences of the word (Romans 16:4; 1 Corinthians 14:33; Hebrews 12:23). No name is given to the church. In giving it a name, one denominates it. Individual members wear Christ’s name (1 Peter 4:16), the name “Christian,” but New Testament writers never designated His church as the Christian Church. If any man speak, let him speak as the utterances of God (1 Peter 4:11). Let none speak of “Church of Christ churches,” “Church of Christ congregations,” “Church of Christ preachers,” or say “I’m a Church of Christ.” May we strive for “purified lips” that we may “serve Him shoulder to shoulder” (Zephaniah 3:9).

### **Worship**

The man of God must heed the charge to preach the Word about worship. He should know that there are four kinds: ignorant worship, vain worship, will worship, and true worship. One who venerates images and idols (Acts 17:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6) is worshiping in ignorance. Even one who venerates the right God may still be worshiping in vain (Matthew 15:9). Jesus defined vain worship as following the doctrines and commandments of men. People have presumed in vain to worship through handwashing, footwashing, dipping fingers in basins of holy water and making the sign of the cross, bowing before images of Mary and Jesus, incense burning, using instrumental music, dancing, and marijuana smoking. Will worship expresses strong determination to abstain from certain foods or self-discipline to undergo whippings, but it is not the worship that the Lord wants (Colossians 2:20–22). True worship has two elements: It must be in the right spirit and it must be in truth (John 4:24).

Worship according to truth is according to the Word (John 17:17). The Word prescribes only five actions of worship (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19). These are reading the Word (Colossians 4:16), giving of one’s means (2 Corinthians 9:7),

the breaking of bread (1 Corinthians 11:23–26), prayer (1 Timothy 2:1), and singing (Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 13:15). When truth is defined as “sincerity” instead of “that which is contained in the word of truth,” any doctrine of men becomes acceptable! Any teaching might be followed sincerely by one who does not know the true teachings of God. Since the doctrines of men are vain in worship (Matthew 15:9), the word “truth” in John 4:24 must be restricted to that which is found written in the word of truth (John 17:17).

Worship in the right spirit forbids lip service only (Matthew 15:8), whether in reading the Scriptures or praying or singing (1 Corinthians 14:15). One who does not discern the Lord’s body when he partakes of the Lord’s Supper cannot be worshiping in the right spirit; instead he is eating and drinking damnation to himself (1 Corinthians 11:27–29). One whose offerings in money are not a result of heart purposes would do just as well to keep his money (2 Corinthians 9:7); he is not worshiping in the right spirit.

God’s preacher, true to Paul’s charge, will make clear to people that the worship of any supposed deity is unacceptable, and that any unauthorized worship directed to the one true God is also unacceptable. God Himself will judge between true and false worship.

### **The Family**

The holy Father’s desire for a “godly seed” (Malachi 2:15) caused Him to make one wife for Adam and one husband for Eve. God despises divorce (Malachi 2:14–16). A couple is bound into such oneness that God acknowledges only one sin bad enough to allow a change to another spouse (Matthew 19:9). Even beatings, drunkenness, incompatibility, and desertion are not enough reason to start another marriage. He who is faithful to Paul’s charge to preach the Word will decry the practice of condoning unscriptural marriages.

If a couple is living in adultery, baptism does not sanctify sin and make it holy. If one has been discarded because he has committed fornication, whoever marries him commits adultery along with him. Whether or not children are involved, whether or not the marriage vows were made before baptism, does not change God’s laws on marriage. God has determined that fornication is worthy of the lake of fire

(Galatians 5:19, 21; Revelation 21:8). Men of God dare not bend the word of truth to fit any human being's desire.

### Zeal

The charge to preach the Word cannot be fulfilled by a preacher who holds strictly to the Lord's laws on marriage, the plan of salvation, and every other point of doctrine, yet fails to stir lazy Christians to work with unabated zeal (1 Corinthians 15:58). The man of God must make vivid the nausea, the stomach sickness, that a lukewarm Christian causes Jesus to suffer (Revelation 3:16). To him that knows good to do, but does not do it, to him it is sin (James 4:17). Indeed, those who have zeal but are barren of knowledge will fare better in the Judgment Day than the one who has knowledge but no zeal (Luke 12:47, 48). "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead" (Ephesians 5:14).

### CONCLUSION

No more important challenge was ever pro-

posed than that given by Paul to Timothy: "Preach the Word." May God help every one of us to (1) believe the Word, (2) obey the Word, and (3) spread the Word!

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<sup>1</sup>Especially is this so if one believes Chrysostom's account of Paul's having converted to Christ a beautiful mistress of Nero. "When she refused to resume the unhallowed alliance, the incensed tyrant wreaked his vengeance on the Apostle and had him sentenced to death" (David Smith, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul* [New York: Harper & Bros., n.d.], 639).

<sup>2</sup>Red letter editions leave the impression that "the words of Christ are in red," when *every* word in the Bible has been given by Christ.

<sup>3</sup>This is the posture of the Douai version, a Catholic translation produced by a team of Oxford scholars at Douai College in Flanders, in 1568.

<sup>4</sup>A number of specific prophecies are considered in the lessons "Prophecies in the Bible," "Messianic Prophecies," and the chart entitled "Selected Messianic Prophecies and Their Fulfillment."

<sup>5</sup>This thinking is evident in J. W. McGarvey, "Repentance," in *McGarvey's Sermons* (Delight, Ark.: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1975), 97-98.

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