

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

## THE BIBLE

A father was approached by his small son, who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means!" His father smiled and replied, "What do you mean, you 'know' the Bible?" The son replied, "I do know!" "Okay," said his father. "So, son, what does the Bible mean?" "That's easy Daddy. It stands for 'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth'!" That is a good acrostic to remember. Bible believers are very familiar with the following passage:

*"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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16-17).*

Did you notice that God's Word is a **direct** book? The Bible came from God directly to man through the process of inspiration. Other books may be "inspiring," but only the Bible is God breathed. Other books may have been written by literary geniuses, but only the Bible can claim God as its author. *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).* Man needed help from above (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 29:18), and, therefore, God revealed His Will to us. While many people read books, the Bible reads people. It reveals who we are inside (James 1:23-24), and we may or may not like what we see. God knows us better than we know ourselves. His Word is a testimony to that fact.

Did you notice that God's word is a **dominant** book? The Bible "thoroughly" furnishes or equips. No other book covers a broader expanse than the Bible. It is an all encompassing, all-inclusive book. Peter writes,

*"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3).*

Many today are saying, "Let's bring Jesus into every area of our lives." That is good, sound theology. However, to bring Jesus into every area of our lives means we must bring His Word into every area of our lives. We can and should do this because the Bible speaks to both genders, all races, and every age group. It is a book that is relevant for the entirety of our lives and will judge us when this life is over (John 12:48). It is a book that deals with people's personalities, problems, and psyche. While there are facts in the Bible that must be believed, remember the Bible is not just a facts book, it is a faith book. For example, one verse in Genesis speaks of God's creation of the sun, moon, and stars (Genesis 1:16). However, a quarter of the book is devoted to the life of one man, Joseph. In his life we see God at work, and God wants to be at work in our lives, as well. The Bible meets our fundamental, basic needs, which are spiritual in nature.

*"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).*

The Bible is no the book of the month, or of the year, but the book of the ages.

Did you notice the Bible is a **desirable** book? For example, it is profitable, complete, and results in something good. Someone perhaps cynically responds, "I find the Bible more demanding than desirable." Of course, something profitable is demanding. Ask someone who has succeeded or excelled in some particular area and most likely that individual will mention someone who demanded much of him—perhaps a parent, teacher, coach, or boss who pushed the individual to reach his full potential. God demands so much of us because He desires us so much. He created us, redeemed us, and

**INQUIRIES ABOUT IMMERSION**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. The Question of \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. The Question of \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. The Question of \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

IV. The Question of \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

V. The Question of \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

**COMFORT YOURSELVES TOGETHER**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. Take Comfort in your \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. Take Comfort in your \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. Take Comfort in your \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

IV. Take Comfort in your \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

longs for our association throughout eternity. Therefore, His word demands our attention and our devotion. Learn the Bible, Love the Bible, Live the Bible. Its message is clear. The Author of the Book, the Hero and central focus of the Bible loves you and is calling you to follow Him.

*-Barry Grider*

**THAT CROOKED SMILE**

As we rolled five-year-old Mary into the MRI room, I tried to imagine what she must be feeling. She had suffered a stroke that left half her body paralyzed, had been hospitalized for treatment of a brain tumor, and had recently lost her father, her mother, and her home. We all wondered how Mary would react.

She went into the MRI machine without the slightest protest, and we began the exam. At that time, each imaging sequence required the patient to remain perfectly still for about five minutes. This would have been difficult for anyone—and certainly for a five-year-old who had suffered so much. We were taking an image of her head, so any movement of her face, including talking, would result in image distortion.

About two minutes into the first sequence, we noticed on the video monitor that Mary’s mouth was moving. We heard a muted voice over the intercom. We halted the exam and gently reminded Mary not to talk. She was smiling and promised not to talk.

We reset the machine and started over. Once again we saw her facial movement and heard her voice faintly. What was she saying wasn’t clear. Everyone was becoming a little impatient; a busy schedule that had been put on hold to perform an emergency MRI on Mary.

We went back in and slid Mary out of the Machine. Once again, she looked at us when her crooked smile and wasn’t upset in the least. The technologist, perhaps a bit gruffly, said, “Mary, you were talking again, and that causes blurry pictures.” Mary’s smile remained as she replied, “I wasn’t talking. I was singing. You said no talking.” We looked at each other, feeling a little silly.

“What were you singing?” someone asked. “Jesus Loves Me,” came the barely perceptible reply. “I always sing ‘Jesus Loves Me’ when I’m happy.”

Everyone in the room was speechless. Happy? How could this little girl be happy? The technologist and I had to leave the room for a moment to regain our composure as tears began to fall.

Many times since that day, when feeling stressed, unhappy, or dissatisfied with some part of my life, I have thought of Mary and felt both humbled and inspired. Her example made me see that happiness is a marvelous gift—free to anyone willing to accept it.

**THE BOOK OF COMFORT**

In either A.D. 51 or 52 the church of Christ was established in the Macedonian city of Thessalonica. It was around that time that Paul, Timothy, and Silas had left Philippi while on their second missionary journey and traveled into Thessalonica. Acts 17:2 indicates that this team was located there about one month during which time they preached Christ and Him crucified. The result of their work was that “*some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few*” (Acts 17:4). Thus souls obeyed the gospel, and the church began in that great city.

Sadly, though many Gentiles and Jews believed and obeyed, there were also many Jews in that city who did not believe and immediately set about to destroy both the message and the messengers (Acts 17:5ff). That persecution did not end when Paul and Silas left, but stayed and continued to stir up trouble among the brethren. Apparently, Timothy remained in Thessalonica for a short time before meeting up with Paul and Silas in Berea. Fortunately the Christians in Thessalonica were not easily provoked, but the trouble continued among them causing Paul a great deal of concern for them. It was thus when Timothy finally caught up with them that he brought news of joy—the church still was faithful. After receiving this report of the Thessalonians continued faith, Paul went about to write this epistle both to express his joy and also to give further warning and encouragement.

The prevalent theme of this great letter is comfort. The word “comfort” is itself used four times in this very short book, revealing Paul’s concern for their emotional and spiritual well-being. Beyond the persecution by the Jewish detractors, the Thessalonians were also in distress about the resurrection, believing that those already dead in Christ would somehow “miss out” on the joys of Christ’s return. In the five provided chapters, Paul goes about the ease their minds about both and encouraged them to be comforted in the Lord for all was well.

First, in I Thessalonians 1, Paul recalls their quick acceptance and steady obedience of the truth with which they had been presented. Particularly inspiring to Paul was their “*work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father...*” (vs. 3). Despite abundant affliction (vs. 6) they received the Word with joy. Not only, though, was their faith an inspiration to Paul, but their faith made them also “*ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia*” (vs. 7). They had forsaken the pagan traditions of their culture and turned to serve the living and true God (vs. 9). Thus, Paul’s recollection of these great people reminded him of what true Christianity was all about, and they could take comfort in that.

Second, in I Thessalonians 2, Paul encouraged them further in their faith in and service to God. The Thessalonians great obedience was contingent on something that much of the world still struggles with—they believed unequivocally that the gospel they had heard preached was not merely the words of men, but were in their entirety the words of God (vs. 13). Their recognition and acceptance of these truths as being original with God stirred devotion deep within their souls and instilled dedication to His great cause. This dedication made them suffer greatly for Christ’s sake (vs. 14), but Paul encouraged them to not give up, fight the fight, finish the course, and keep the faith. Thus, Paul graciously commended the brethren for their great stand for right, and they could take comfort in that.

Third, in I Thessalonians 3, Paul expresses his joy in their faith and reminds them of the hope to which they earnestly looked as children of God and benefactors of Christ’s death. Paul was overjoyed, to put it lightly, upon hearing of Timothy’s favorable report of the brethren’s faith. He then went on to remind them that life is found in Christ (vs. 8), and thus encouraged them to stand fast in Him. The rewarding conclusion of which would be that “*he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints*” (vs. 13). Thus, Paul reminded the brethren of the abundant blessings promised to those who did the will of the Father, and they could take comfort in that.

Fourth, in I Thessalonians 4, Paul eased the worries of bereaved Christians and explained to them somewhat the details of the final day. There was a concern that the faithful who had already died would be forgotten in the resurrection, but Paul, in desiring that they not be ignorant about this matter (vs. 13) explains to them that just as Jesus died and arose that those dead in Jesus will rise again as well (vs. 14). In fact, the dead in Christ will rise first to meet the Lord in the air, after which those alive will be caught up in the air (vs. 16-17). Thus, Paul eased their minds by saying the dead in Christ would not be prevented from that great reunion in the sky, and they could take comfort in that.

Then, fifth, in I Thessalonians 5, Paul went about to rouse the brethren to greater service and faith in Christ with some concluding exhortations. Highlighted in verses 1-11 is the need to be watchful of one’s soul because the previously mentioned return of Christ will not be predicted by times and seasons (vs. 1), but will be as a thief in the night. Thus in view of that coming day Paul encouraged them to heed the practical advice of the final seventeen verses, and by doing so, they could take comfort in it.

I Thessalonians is a great book that reminds us of the comfort that we too can and do have in Christ. So to the soul wallowing in pain and grief, study the great will of Christ, and comfort yourself with these words.

-Andy Brewer